



Lovers from 1970

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# Crystal Ball

George walked up the steps of his house, keys in hand and a dark look on his face.

The neighborhood had been quiet except for the occasional passing car, which did not help his ongoing battle with isolation and loneliness. The quieter it was, the louder his thoughts were, and so as he entered his empty home which housed a quiet so large a drop of a pin would be highly audible, his head filled with a mass of concepts.

He trudged his way up to his room, carrying his jacket in his hand as he threw his keys onto the desk and collapsed on his bed. He waited a while, his mind the only thing keeping him company, and it wasn't good company. All he had were regrets and scenarios of brighter futures had he made better decisions in the past. It's been lonely since he moved away from his family in england. He moved into a small house in the old part of his town. He lived alone and didn't bother to get to know anyone.

Suddenly he heard a ring come from the other side of the room. It wasn't coming from his cellphone, but from the vintage telephone he had found in his house when he first moved in. He had spent weeks trying to repair it but eventually gave up, but now it seemed to be fully operational.

He ran to the phone and answered, "Hello?"

"Hey Sap, can you believe Governor Schlatt had a heart attack and died today? That's insane." A man on the other end of the phone mumbled into the phone.

"I'm sorry, but you must have the wrong num- Today?" George asked, confused.

"Oh well sorry then, but yeah today. It's all over the papers." The voice answered, not bothering to end the call even though it was the wrong number.

George raised his brow, "Are we talking about Governor Schlatt of Florida?"

"Yeah, who else." The man answered, his shrug visible in his tone.

"Schlatt died over fifty years ago, though. Is this like a joke or something?" George was convinced he was talking to either someone very uneducated or downright insane.

The man laughed loudly, "I don't know about you, but I don't remember Schlatt dying in 1920."

Now George knew the man couldn't do math. Fifty years ago was not 1920.

"Everyone knows it happened in 1970. Then his right hand man Tubbo was almost assassinated the next day." George told the man.

He did not know why he was so hellbent on correcting a stranger, but he did so nonetheless.

"Tubbo? Everybody loves Tubbo. He's fine and giving a speech right now, listen." The phone sounded like it was moving, and suddenly put up to a radio.

The radio was barely audible, but George could make out words like "This is a tragic loss." and such. It definitely sounded like Tubbo. George figured he was talking to a crazy person and hung up. He walked over to his bed, thought about the phone call for no more than 3 minutes before falling asleep.

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It was the next day. George brought up a bowl of cereal to his room to eat.

He seemed to stare at his cellphone, waiting for calls and texts of "how are you?" from people that never seem to come.

He booted up his computer to watch videos, when suddenly the old telephone started ringing again. George hesitated for a bit. Did he really want to talk to

a crazy person again? Then again it wasn't like there was anyone else that would talk to him.

He sighed then picked up the phone. "Hel-" "How did you know." The same man said into the phone.

"What?" "About Tubbo. How someone was going to attempt to kill him today." He asked seriously.

George rolled his eyes, "I told you. Everyone in the state knows, we learned about it in school and everything. Didn't you? Also why do you keep saying 'today'?"

"What's the date for you?" The man asked George.

"Uh..." George tapped his phone to check the date, "July 28, 2020." No response. Just heavy breathing that sounded like hyperventilating.

After a while the man spoke again softly, "It's July 28, 1970 here."

Now this was confirmation that whoever George was talking to was crazy.

"Look if this is some kind of prank I'm just going to hang up. This isn't my phone and I'm not 'Sap' or whoever that is."

"WAIT." The man yelled, "Do you live on 821 Manburg street?"

George started freaking out. The man knew his address. He was going to end the call and contact police or- or-

"Don't freak out!" The man read his mind,

"That's my old house. Well it's my 'old house' for you but I live there right now. Does the upstairs bedroom still have the hideous flower wallpaper?"  
"Yes." George answered hesitantly.

"That means they haven't changed it since I lived there! Give me a sec." The man was silent for a while until George heard a clicking sound. It was a pen uncapping.

"What are you doing?" George asked.

"Look in the corner of the wall, near the window." The man told him.

"Why-" "Just do it." George heard what sounded like scribbling on the other side of the phone. George hesitated, but walked anyway to the corner of the room,

"What am I supposed to be looking at-" Suddenly, old worn out pen marks started appearing on the wall slowly, like burning wood. "Hi" it said.

"Do you see that?" The man on the other side of the phone asked, before audibly capping his pen again.

"Y-yes." George was hyperventilating and clutching his chest. This surely was not possible.

"Who are you?" "Who are you?" They both asked at the same time, but the man answered first, "My name's Cl- Dream." "Dream?" George raised a brow. "It's a nickname. I don't want to give you my real name yet since you could be some government spy or something." George chuckled, "Well I'm George."

"So tell me George, who wins the world series next year? Asking for a friend." Dream asked, half jokingly.

"I'm afraid I can't tell you that." George responded, "Well technically I can, but morally it's pretty wrong."

"Darn, thought that was going to work." Dream asked, "So tell me about the future. Wait does that sound nerdy? Hm, tell me about 2020."

"Well..."

# Paint

"...I can't tell you much. Isn't it science fiction common knowledge that telling someone of the past too much would mess up the future?" George told Dream.

"I suppose you're right." Dream sighed, "Well I know now that I moved out, since you live in my house now."

"So who's Sap?" George asked.

"My friend Nick. We call him Sapnap, and I'm guessing you have his telephone but I don't know why it ended up there at my house."

"Really? That's what you're confused about? What about the whole 'talking to someone from a different time' part?" George mentioned.

"Obviously I'm confused too." It's like George could hear his eye roll,

"So how old are you?" Dream asked

"24" George didn't know why he was telling this to a stranger, but his loneliness and desperation got the best of him.

"I'm 21." Dream answered with no hesitation, and George only assumed that he was a confident sort of man.

"What do you do for a living?" George let curiosity replace his anxiety over the magical phone.

Dream chuckled, "I coach baseball for little kids. I love baseball. What about you?"

"Do I love baseball? Or what I do for a living?" George questioned.

"Hm why not answer both, I've got time." Dream replied.

George lay down on his bed and stared up at the ceiling,

"I'm not that into sports. Also, I program video games for computers for a living."

"What kind of job is that?" George smiled, "I forgot you probably don't know what those are yet."

"Yeah. Hello?! I'm in the past!" Dream joked, letting out a hearty laugh that warmed George's heart .

George smiled before glancing at his digital alarm clock, "Well I have to go, I should sleep."

"Boo." Dream groaned into the phone.

As fun as it was to talk to Dream, it was getting late into the night and he had projects to finish, he was letting these phone calls get in the way of his work, which was the last thing he had going for him in his life.

"Goodbye, wrong number." Dream bid him goodbye.

"Goodbye old man."

"Hey! I'm not old yet." Dream laughed before hanging up.

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It had been a week since Dream and George had first started talking, and needless to say they had become good friends. George had started eating lunch up in his room, awaiting a phone call around the same time everyday, and again with dinner in the night. They talked about anything and everything, including their childhoods and favorite things from their time. Dream had made George promise not to look for him in 2020, or try to google him ("Whatever that was.") So George kept his promise, and they continued to speak as if the only distance between them was miles, and not time.

"It's weird, we can't physically communicate. I mean we can but I'm assuming you're old." George laughed.

"I have an idea." Dream after a while. He left the phone on his dresser and told George he'd be back.

George waited patiently, counting the many flowers on his wall, when he heard the faint voice come from the phone again.

"What's your idea?" George asked, turning to his side on the pillow.

"Go to the wall next to the window." Dream urged George.

George groaned, indicating his tiredness, but Dream insisted he go. Grudgingly, he got up and walked to the wall next to the window as Dream told him to.

"Now what?"

Dream stood by the window. The walls where he was (in time) were much newer and intact than George's. He had come from the shed with a bucket of lime green paint. He pinned the phone between his cheek and shoulder and opened the paint can.

"Dream? What are you doing?" He heard George ask.

"Just look at the wall." Dream said, as he took a brush and applied a thin coat of paint on his entire hand.

"Ready?" Dream said into the phone.

George sighed, "Yes. Though I don't exactly know what I'm ready for."

George waited at the wall, whistling. Suddenly lime paint started appearing on the wall. It was appearing slowly and a bit chipped and worn out, but there nonetheless.

"George? Are you there? I hope you see it and no one erased it after I moved out." Dream talked into the phone.

It was a handprint. A seemingly former lime green handprint, (it was darker and faint now). George stayed silent and absentmindedly put his own hand

over the handprint. Dream's hand seemed bigger than his, with slightly longer fingers.

"George?" Dream called out, and George pulled his hand away quickly.

"I- yeah I see it." George chuckled.

"Did you hold my hand?" Dream asked. "Wh- I- ho-" George choked out but Dream started laughing.

"Calm down, I'm kidding." George could hear his smile,

"I wonder what else we could try out." George sat down on his bed, still looking at the paint handprint.

"I wonder why you've never visited."

"What?" Dream questioned.

"Why future you hasn't visited me yet since we started talking? Like why you never came on July 29 to tell me you're who I'm talking to." George pondered curiously.

"Maybe I'm dead." Dream said, half-jokingly.

George hated that thought. It was possible, and he fought back his urge to google him and find out everything he could about Dream, but the only information he had was that he lived here before, and Dream didn't want George to go looking for him. They bid each other goodnight, and George fell asleep on his side, staring at the green handprint on the wall.

# Time Capsule

Dream and George found other ways to communicate, with George having the brilliant idea of Dream leaving a time capsule buried somewhere in the backyard for George to find.

George uploaded his work project onto his computer, and walked outside with a shovel he had recently purchased. Dream had told him it was put in the corner near the fence, and had hoped no one had taken it out since it was put in.

With that information, George started to dig. He wasn't the strongest physically, but he persisted with each stab of the shovel into the cold dirt. Out of the corner of his eye he saw someone looking at him. It must have looked weird, to be digging a hole in your backyard. He must have looked like he was digging a grave to dump a body in.

George shrugged at the man, which prompted him to walk away. The man looked quickly into a pocket notebook while he was walking away, and wrote something down. George was scared it was notes about him being suspicious that he was going to report to the police.

It had been over 15 minutes, and George sighed. He took a look at the pile of dirt on the ground and shook his head. Someone must have found the capsule before him.

He was about to shovel the dirt he worked so hard on digging out back into the hole when a glimmer of light reached his eyes. There, buried into the ground was a hint of metal. George's eyes widened as he ran for the shovel again, picking at the ground until he found a pill-shaped metal container.

It had masking tape on it with the word "George" written. He did not even bother shoveling the dirt back in, he ran back home to rinse off the outside of the container and shuffled into his room. Right on time, the phone started ringing.

George picked up, "Dream! I've got your capsule."

Dream chuckled, "So you do. Well open it, I'm curious how long the things in there survived."

It took George a while, as the rust created a sort of lock in between the seams, but eventually it popped open with such a force that George was thrown back a little with a groan.

"You alright?" Dream asked worriedly into the phone.

George got back up, "Yes. Just fine."

A couple of things inside the capsule scattered around the floor due to how it opened. George grabbed the first thing he saw.

He squinted at it, "Pow-Chew?" He tried to read on the wrapper.

"Yes!" Dream said excitedly, "I love those."

"What is this?" He held it up to his nose and sniffed it, it smelled like rotten candy.

"It's gum. Check the expiration date." Dream ordered.

The wrapper had a barely visible blob of ink that represented the expiration date. "*August 12th 1971*" George read out loud.

"I can't believe this never attracted ants." George put the candy on his desk and reached for something else he found on the floor. It was a rock.

"Is this quartz?" George asked.

"Yeah. It's my favorite one I own." Dream admitted.

George held it tightly in his hand, "Why give it to me, then?"

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Dream lay on his bed, letting his records play in the background and staring at the wallpaper. "Why give it to me, then?" How was Dream to answer that? He gave it to George because he wanted his favorite person to have his favorite thing, but all of it was so wrong. He cared about someone who didn't even exist yet. He cared about his best friend Sapnap too, but not in the way he did for George, someone he had never even met.

"Dream?" George mumbled into the phone.

"Oh- uh yeah, I guess I just don't think I'll need it in the future." He answered untruthfully.

"Hm, alright." George sounded like he was scrambling to pick up more items.

In the capsule were other little things such as an old music cassette and baseball cards. After a while, George saw a little canister and held it up to his eyes. He then opened it, it was dry, cracking, and expired (formerly) lime paint that was now a dark foresty green.

"What did you open?" Dream asked quietly.

"Green paint." George dipped his finger in, and what he saw surprised him.

His finger broke into the hard cracked layer and into a watery, preserved lime paint that he was sure was the original color.

"I'm sure it's ugly now, right?" Dream joked, but George looked at his finger covered in paint.

"No. It's perfect." George had an idea.

He spilled a good portion of the can onto his hand and spread it around with a finger.

"Are you there? What are you doing?" Dream asked, but George walked over to his bedroom wall.

He glanced at Dream's handprint, and with one movement, placed his paint-covered hand right next to it. The difference in sizes of their hands was

interesting, along with the detail that Dream's handprint was old and cracking, while George's was clean and fresh and still a bright color.

George grabbed the phone with his clean hand, "Yeah, I'm here."

"What did you do?" George stared at the two handprints, "Nothing." He mumbled.

"Oh." Dream murmured, "Well there's one more thing in there, taped to the inside of the capsule, you can look at it but I'll have to hang up."

"Why?" George asked.

"Bye, George. Have a good night." Dream bid and before George could ask for an explanation once again, their connection cut.

George put down the phone with a sigh and checked the inside of the capsule container. Inside was a piece of paper. A polaroid. It was of Dream. Seemingly candid taken by another person. He was smiling, with beautiful dirty blonde hair and a tall stature. He was holding a pet cat and was in the very bedroom George was in at that moment. George thought he was quite handsome. He was getting sleepy, and his eyes fell closed with the photo held close to him.

# Concepts

George was sitting at his computer, finishing work up as he had been too caught up talking to Dream to remember doing so.

Every time he opened his computer, he always had to resist the urge to search google endlessly for Dream, but his promise not to go looking for him was more important than his curiosity.

He was rushing his project, waiting for the phone to ring. This had become a daily thing, procrastinating then laying in his bed with the phone next to him waiting for a call from a boy he's never met in person. The magic and impossibility of the whole thing had passed.

His interest in Dream and his life had made him forget how absurd the whole thing had sounded. It made him forget how far away in time Dream was. Maybe it was the fact that he had been lonely. His family had been back in England, and he had lived alone for the past 6 years, only having one or two friends who he had not even talked to in months each.

Sometimes when you are lonely, you cling to the one person who makes you feel like you have everybody in the world. For George, that was Dream. Dream asked him things that no one had ever bothered to ask. From simple things like how his day was, to unique questions such as what he would take with him if he had 60 seconds to gather things into a bomb shelter. He didn't know the last time someone had ever been that interested in him and what he had to say. He couldn't remember when he had last heard himself talk about things that he actually liked to talk about. So yes, despite the time difference (no kidding), there was a connection there that mattered to him, the first connection he had had in a while.

As he submitted his day's work of coding, he absentmindedly walked over to the wall. He didn't know how many times he looked at it a day. From the "Hi" in the corner of the room, to the two hand prints made with the same paint at different times, knowing there was something to prove the boy he was talking

to existed made him feel calm when his world felt like crumbling. The photo of Dream lay on his desk, his smile permanently captured onto a piece of film that had survived fifty years under the dirt.

Furthermore presenting the fact that Dream was real. So, as he clutched the phone in his hand still vaguely stained with paint, waiting for a call, he did not see it as wasting time. He saw it as an opportunity to finally speak to someone who cares about him. Just on time, the phone started ringing and he picked up quickly.

"So you saw the photo?" Dream had wasted no time in asking.

George glanced to the corner of the room on the desk it lay on,

"Yes, I did. That's you, right?"

"Yes." Dream sighed as he seemingly slumped down onto a chair,

"My friend Sap took it. The cat is my cat Patches."

"When you called this phone, it's because you thought it was Sap, right?" George questioned curiously.

"Yeah. This is his number." Dream answered,

"He doesn't know I talk to you, though. I think he'd see me as crazy." George chuckled,

"You're already crazy."

"Thank you, thank you." Dream gave short laughs, "So I thought about the science of it all." He said after he had gathered himself.

George raised his eyebrow, "The science? Is this even science? This is straight sci-fi magic." George said, half-jokingly.

"Well yes, but if all our experiments with the time capsule and the paint worked out, it means that I do exist in your so-called 'timeline' and I'm

somewhere out there in your world existing as a poor old man," Dream began.

"Go on." George was intrigued. "That should mean that before our first phone call, I never knew you existed yet, but after we started talking, I think we started modifying the memories of the Dream in your time and adding in events that we create."

"So," George began, "why hasn't old you ever visited me yet?" "Like I said, I could be dead, or gotten Alzheimer's, or just refuse to see you for a reason I do not know yet." Dream suggested.

"Why don't you let me look you up on the internet, then?" George asked.

Dream knew about the internet as George had spent hours trying to explain the concept of it to him.

"I just," Dream struggled, "I don't know. I guess I like the idea that we're talking as if this whole 50 year gap doesn't exist. It's weird to think that now I'm an old man in your time, and that we're so far apart from each other. You finding out about old me just proves that this friendship would never be a normal one." Dream had done his best to explain.

"I understand and feel the same way." George said quietly.

"Thank you. Also, thank you for keeping your promise."

"Of course, anytime." George smiled and looked at the clock, "I should sleep. It's late and I have a meeting with some colleagues early in the morning tomorrow."

"Have fun with that." Dream chuckled,

"Goodnight, wrong number."

"Goodnight old man." George joked.

"Hey! I'm not even old yet-"

"Yeah yeah, Sleep well, Dream." George finished.

# Surpression

The reason George bought the house he lived in was because he was young and did not have money for a newer, furnished house. The fact that it was never repainted or even cleaned showed that Dream or any of his family were the people that lived in the house last. Most of the furniture was taken except for an old sofa, some junk in the attic, and, of course, the telephone held in his hand, waiting for a call.

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Dream was crouching against the wall, his hands digging into his hair. Drunk. He did not normally drink, but tonight was an exception. He clutched a bottle in his hand, and the phone in the other, contemplating whether to call George despite his faltering mental state, or not to call, leaving George lonely for the night.

Sapnap had been at his house earlier, doing his best to send words of comfort. Dream had put on a brave face to assure him, then broke down as soon as Sapnap closed the door behind him. Alcohol was never a problem for him, it was more of a problem for his father. He had promised never to go down that same path but here he was, bottle in hand and mental state out of control. He knew who he wanted and needed to talk to, but he was terrified.

The situation would induce anxiety in everyone, talking to somebody from the future. But when he spoke to George, it was easy to ignore the absurdity of it all. He loved to hear him talk about things almost as though he had never been asked about them before. He loved to hear his voice in general.

And so, he put the bottle down on the drawer next to the wall with such a force that it shattered, splattering the few of the contents inside onto the floor and walls, leaving only the telephone in his hands as he dialed a number.

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George sat on his floor holding the phone and scrolling through his Twitter news feed, looking at what was trending when he sighed and put the phone down. He glanced for a second at the wall, which housed an unfamiliar stain. It was dark and absolutely stood out against the vintage, flowery wallpaper.

It was definitely made by Dream. His initial thought was that it was blood, which scared him. He wanted so badly to ask Dream if he was okay but dialing from his end never worked. Only Dream had the power to call George. Right on time, the phone rang and he answered in an instant.

"Dream, are you alright?" He asked frantically.

"Yes, why do you ask?" Dream's words slurred a bit but he still had the confident straight speech he usually had. George ran his hands on the wallpaper,

"The wall stained, I thought you'd gotten hurt or something."

Dream looked at the wall and broken glass scattered around the desk and floor and understood,

"I spilled my drink."

"On the walls?" George asked skeptically.

"I can be clumsy." Dream laughed slowly, "Oh, I can be quite clumsy." He let out a bigger laugh.

"Dream," George raised a brow, "are you drunk? Was the drink alcoholic?"

Dream sighed in surrender, "Yeah."

"But you told me you don't drink."

"I don't." Dream said truthfully, "It's just-"

"Just?" George crossed his legs and waited for a response.

"I've just had a bad day." Dream sounded defeated, "I have better ways of dealing with bad days but I wanted to see what it felt like to suppress it with a drink like my father did. To see if it would work"

George had never heard Dream talk about his father. He had gone on and on about his mother and sisters but George had never bothered to ask about his father, as he took the hint not to from Dream's refusal to speak about him. "Maybe it does," George told him, "but you sober up and you start feeling it again. The most it does it numbs you. I don't drink so I can't speak from experience, and I'm not against drinking, but if you can't use it to solve your problems."

"I know." Dream said, and he did know.

He had seen the lasting effect it had on his family when his father took another bottle from the fridge.

"It's like putting a bandaid on a wound that needs stitches." George hit him truthfully.

"There's better ways that work long term."

"Like?"

"Like talking to someone. You said you have your friend Sapnap. You can write a diary, let it all out, or you can talk to-

"You."

George let out a breath, "Me."

"I'm sorry I don't really feel ready to talk about it yet, but I know I have you, and that soothes me." Dream did not mean to say that much, but his drunken self didn't know better.

"You should get some sleep, Dream." George said in a comforting way.

"George?" Dream whispered.

"Yes, Dream?"

"I-" Dream began but he sighed, he was sober enough to fight off anything impulsive he wanted to say.

"You..?"

"I- should get some sleep. You're right." Dream saved himself.

"Goodnight, old man." George chuckled.

"Goodnight, wrong number." Dream whispered so close to the phone George swore he felt a breath tickle his ear. He waited a while before putting the phone down.

# Who Could Hate Flowers?

It had been a week, and since then Dream's inner demons had subsided. He continued to speak to George, and Sapnap (if he wasn't busy with work), and since then he had been feeling better. Not perfect, but better. At that moment he had been on the phone with George, talking about their favorite thing of certain categories.

"Hmmm," George mumbled, "favourite animal?"

Dream got up and walked over to the small pet bed on the floor and picked up his cat Patches,

"Cats. Say hi, Patches."

He put the phone up to Patches' nose but obviously she was in no mood to say hi to anyone.

"She's moody." George smiled, "Did you wake her up forcefully?"

Dream put Patches back on her bed,

"No comment." George shook his head with a laugh,

"I like cats too." He told him,

"I used to have one named Luca."

"Cat people are the best." Dream said and George hummed in agreement.

"What haven't we asked?" George wondered out loud after a few moments of silence. Dream was looking outside his window when he saw a man pull up in his neighbor's driveway.

His neighbor came out and she smiled at the man, who presented her with the brightest and fullest of red roses. She happily took them from him and gave

him a hug, and he picked her up and spun her. Dream immediately assumed these were people who had not seen each other for a while meeting for the first time again.

These kinds of moments made Dream slightly jealous. He had never had serious romantic connections other than the occasional one time date that usually ended in disaster. He would have loved to be the one to bring someone flowers.

"Dream? You're quiet but I feel like I can hear your thoughts." George said after a while, snapping Dream out of his head.

"Sorry." Dream apologized,

"But, I thought of a question." George hummed,

"Alright, what is it?" "What's your favourite flower?"

Dream could not handle watching the happy couple any longer, so he shut his blinds and covered his windows with his white curtain.

"I don't know much about flowers," George began, "but I do admire orchids or calendulas."

Dream knew exactly what those flowers were, as he had helped his mother in her flower shop for years. He knew his flowers and he knew how to take care of them, and he loved them very much,

He thought about George's answer, "Any particular reason?"

"Well orchids were my mother's wedding flowers, they were everywhere apparently." George explained,

"As for calendulas, they're just quite beautiful."

"Cool. Now I know what flowers to send to you." Dream half joked.

"How would that work?" George was genuinely curious.

"I've given you items before." Dream suggested.

"Flowers from 1970 couldn't survive 50 years in a time capsule, Dream."

Dream sighed, "Well I know that."

He sat down against the wall, "I'll figure it out."

Dream would be in his near 70's if he was still alive during George's time. That fact physically hurt him to think about, but still he brainstormed ways to get flowers to 2020. He then came up with an idea,

"George, I have to go get some stuff from the store, but I'll call you again tonight."

There was a small scuffle from George's end before he responded with a "talk to you later", and they both hung up.

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Dream drove his car to the nearest flower shop. It was near his house and was squished between a nightclub and a bookstore. He walked in and the smell of fresh flowers overwhelmed him, but felt clean and new. The door also rang a few bells when he opened it, which he found cool.

"Welcome." The man running the store greeted him, wearing an apron and tending to some plants hanging up from the ceiling,

"Need anything specific, sir?"

Dream walked over to him, "Yes actually. Do you sell seeds by any chance?"

The man stepped down from his small staircase ladder and gave him a goofy smile,

"As a matter of fact we do. Follow me." Dream followed the young man over to the back where seeds and other various gardening supplies were kept.

"They're organized alphabetically in these little drawers." The shopkeeper explained, "I'll be tending to those plants outside, but if you need any help finding something in particular just give a shout or come find me." He grinned again before walking back to where he was working earlier.

Dream laughed and shook his head as he walked away, amused by the young man's energy. He then walked to the drawers and looked for orchid seeds, but could not find any. Dream was too shy to call the man over so quickly after he had just walked away, so in the meantime he went over to find calendula seeds.

To his luck, he opened the drawer and found one last packet of calendula seeds. He took them and walked over to where the shopkeeper was.

"Excuse me." Dream looked up because the man was high up on the ladder snipping little leaves of plants.

The man looked down, "Oh hello! Find what you need?"

Dream nodded, "Yes, but, do you keep orchid seeds by any chance?"

The man frowned, "No, actually. They take years to grow properly from a seed and we just can't get our hands on them to stock."

Dream gestured his understanding, "That's alright," he smiled, "I'll just be taking these then." He shook the seeds to show him.

"Calendulas. Pot marigolds. Very pretty when they grow." He stepped down from his staircase ladder once again and led him to the counter. "They also mean 'little clock' or 'little calendar.'" The man informed.

"Yes," Dream agreed, "the person I'm getting them for thinks so too." "Oh, so you got a girl that loves to garden then?" Dream chuckled at the innocent question, "It's a bit complicated."

"It always is." The shopkeeper agreed,

"My little lady hates flowers, so it's complicated for me, too."

"Who could hate flowers?"

"Her apparently since she's allergic." He grinned nonchalantly before handing Dream the seed packet and taking the money.

Dream smiled back, "Well thank you uh-," he squinted at the nametag on the man's apron, "Karl."

"You're welcome sir!" He waved goodbye happily before going back to taking care of his plants.

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Dream came home and packed the seeds into a time capsule and burying it in the usual spot he'd put it in, then called George, notifying him that he indeed had figured out a way to get him *flowers from 1970*.

# "Shes allergic"

George held the fifty year old seed packet in one hand, and the phone in another, "Dream, I've got no idea how to grow flowers, and don't have any supplies" "You don't have to grow them, you can keep the seeds and say they're flowers because technically they are." George shook his head, "No. You went through the trouble, the least I could do is grow them. Plus I needed a new hobby again anyway and gardening seems like a fun thing to try." "I left a little list of things you need and some tips in the container." Dream reminded him, and George picked up the capsule and indeed there was a small paper with chicken scratch-like handwriting. "Nice handwriting." "Oh shush," Dream chuckled, "I never was one for good penmanship." George read over the paper, "If you don't mind, I'll be off now to get supplies before it gets too dark."

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Dream sighed in defeat, he felt a little selfish for always wanting to be the person George spent his time with, but understood he had a life. "Alright," He said, "can I call later?"

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"I'm not sure but definitely try." George said as he put on a jacket and grabbed his car keys. "Goodbye for now then, George." Dream said over the phone. "Bye, Dream." George responded before putting the phone down and walking out of his house into his car. He sat on the driver's seat and put his cellphone on his phone holder, "Hey Siri," the phone beeped, "directions to the nearest gardening store." The phone took a moment before it spoke, "Alright, I found gardening stores near you." The first store was only 0.5 miles away, which was awful close, so he chose it then pulled out of his driveway.

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George got to the gardening store, which was a bit run down from the outside but when he walked in it was very clean and nice and a beautiful place. He looked around, unsure where to begin to look, when an old man who was watering a row of soil turned to him, "Why hello!" He smiled happily, "Anything I can do for you, sir?" George took out the piece of paper with Dream's list of supplies, but realized he left it at home. "You alright, sir?" "Do you know how to help me get what I need to grow a certain type of flower?" George asked politely. "Do I?" The old man put his fists on his hips like a superhero, and George was surprised at how he could still be so energetic even in his old age. "Why I'm probably the best in town to help you with that, young lad. What are you growing?" "Calendulas." George showed him the seed packet. The old man looked at the brand and label closely, "Why this here is one of our seed packets! We haven't had these flowers in stock since good old '70. How did you get your hands on these?" "Er—" George scratched the back of his head, "found them in an old drawer." The man looked at him skeptically, "Well, I can go get what you need myself and you can wait here, look around if you'd like." George raised his eyebrows, "Oh I can help you if you'd like." He offered but the shopkeeper shook his head furiously. "No no, I haven't helped a customer like you in months. Maybe years. Let me feel like I am doing my job again." He assured me. George became sad at how the man's business was seemingly slow and dry, and agreed to letting the man get the supplies for him. After a (surprisingly fast) few minutes, the man came back with a garden of basic supplies he needed to grow the flowers. George followed him over the counter, "Thank you." "No problem. So why the interest in beginning gardening?" The old man asked while placing his items in a tote. George thought about it for a while, "Just wanted to see if these old flowers have any hope in growing." "You'll need a lot of love and patience if you want to see even a leaf come out of the dirt of flowers from 1970-something." He told George before telling him the total price of his items, which was cheap. George took out a one hundred dollar bill, "Keep the change." He smiled. The man's eyes widened, "Why thank you! You're lucky to be able to grow flowers at home. I can't." "Why is that?" George asked as he took his tote of items. "My wife hates most flowers," He answered plainly. "Hates them? Who could hate flowers, though?" George wondered aloud. The man smiled, "Her, since she's allergic." George was taken aback. A flower store owner who's wife is allergic to flowers? "Wow, that must be complicated then." "It always is."

The man said, with a big smile, "But we've lasted over fifty years so I guess it hasn't been that complicated." He assured happily, then he suddenly shivered. "Are you alright sir?" George asked. "Oh why yes." He smiled goofily, "I just got a weird sense of *deja vu*. Anyway, my name is Karl, and if you need anything else you're welcome whenever you'd like!" George chuckled, "I'll be sure to turn to you, Karl. Thank you."

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George got home and placed his stuff on his bedroom floor. He looked through the items and grabbed the piece of paper with Dream's instructions he had left on his desk. The phone then rang and George rushed to answer it, "Hello Dream, I just got supplies." "That's good, will you start growing the flowers soon?" He asked. George organized his new items, "I should be, I'm not busy anytime soon." "Good." Dream audibly smiled. "It was a funny story, I met the cheeriest old man I could ever meet." "Was it me?" Dream joked. George rolled his eyes, "No. It was the man who owned the flower shop." "Bummer it wasn't me." He said lightheartedly, "Anyway, why was he funny?" George sat down on the edge of his bed, taking his jacket off, "He owns a flower shop but his wife's allergic to flowers." There was silence on the phone. "Dream?" "No way!" He shouted suddenly. "What is it?" "Was his name Karl?" Dream asked excitedly. George's eyes widened, "Y-yeah! You know him?" "He's who I bought the seeds from, George!" He laughed, "That means we've officially been connected through one person." "That makes sense. He said he hasn't sold Calendula seeds since 1970. Oh goodness this is so weird." George shook his head. "Weird? It's absolutely awesome!" Dream exclaimed. "Also it's great and surprising he's still with the lady allergic to flowers." George thought for a second, "Wait so," he thought some more, "isn't it interesting how we both talked to Karl these last two days, but in reality us meeting him is fifty years apart." Dream sighed when he heard "fifty years apart", but he hummed in agreement. "Anyways, I'll get on to sleep, so I can spend the morning trying to grow these flowers." Dream smiled, "Alright then. Goodnight wrong number." "Sleep well, old man who's technically not old yet." Dream smiled before hanging up the phone and laying in his bed, staring at the ceiling until he eventually drifted off to sleep.

# A Happy Family

George was thankful for living in 2020. The age of the internet where, if you had no idea how to do something, with one click of a button you could after ten minutes. Though George had this advantage, he himself was the problem. He had watched different tutorials but he was still confused. He was visible to the cars passing by and must have looked absolutely stupid. He groaned and put his hand through his hair, planting flowers could not possibly be that hard. "How does Karl do this?" George whispered aggressively to himself before crumbling onto the hard dirt. The man who had watched him dig up the time capsule was once again writing furiously in his pocket notebook, before spotting George and walking towards him. George started to panic. Why was this stranger walking toward him? Who was he? He did not have time to think before the stranger appeared in front of him and pulled down his hoodie to reveal a young man in a beanie and circular, gold rimmed glasses. "You look like you're struggling. May I help?" George watched him suspiciously, wondering why a passerby would help someone like him with such a seemingly easy task like planting flowers, "Er- I just don't know how to do this." The man knelt down in front of the plant pot, "I'm Wilbur. Wilbur Soot. I live a couple houses down with my young son." George was a bit more relieved when he learned the man was a father, "George Davidson." They shook hands, "How old is your son?" Wilbur gestured over to a line of trees in which a boy and his friend were sword-fighting, "The blonde one's mine. He's 6." George watched the two young boys play. "You took my video game disc and broke it! That disc was so important to me!" One of them said as he slashed his foam sword toward his smaller, brunette friend. His poor friend cowered slightly but swung his sword nonetheless, "It's just a disc, Tommy!" He said in a high pitched voice, but Tommy was not giving in, he kept going at it, which highly amused George. "Tommy!" A blonde woman with a soft voice called to him, "Play nice, please!" She seemed used to yelling at him for that reason. "But he took my-" Tommy began to sputter but was interrupted immediately. "It's a disc, Tommy," The woman told him, "we can get another one easily." Tommy shook his head angrily, "It won't be the same." He complained, and his brunette friend rolled his eyes before dodging another sword hit. "They seem close." George told

Wilbur, and Wilbur nodded with a smile. "Practically been friends since birth." Wilbur seemed experienced with planting flowers, expertly burying the seed and watering as if he's done so many times in the past. "Thank you." George sent a small smile to Wilbur, "I assume it's not that hard and I'm just extremely dense." "No pro—" Wilbur began but his son ran toward him suddenly, tears in his eyes. "Daddy! He's here again!" The boy sobbed, collapsing into his father's arms. "Who's here, Tommy?" Wilbur comforted the young boy. "Uncle!" Tommy cried into Wilbur's chest, pointing to his far left. Wilbur looked at George apologetically, "He's afraid of his uncle." George was about to ask why when suddenly a man with a tall stature, boots, and hair with pink highlights shouted, "WHERE IS THESEUS?" George understood why Tommy found him intimidating. He was terrifying and his voice boomed across the neighborhood. "I heard a little someone is fighting people for a disc. If that's you, come here and fight me to the death!" The uncle shouted, before spotting Tommy, "Was it you?" "N-no" Tommy whimpered but Techno moved closer, not believing his lie, "Okay yes. I'm sorry Uncle Techno." Wilbur looked to the blonde woman, "Did you call him, Niki?" Niki gave an apologetic look, "He was being mean to Tubbo, and this is the only way to stop him." Uncle "Techno" grabbed the sword from Tubbo and marched toward Tommy, "I'll show you what fighting for possessions looks like." "AAAAAAH" Tommy ran past Techno, who attempted to grab him but he was too slippery. He made a beeline to Tubbo, "I'm sorry, Tubbo." "Is Tubbo his real name?" George asked Wilbur. "No," Wilbur explained, "His name is Toby, but we nickname him Tubbo because he admires the historical figure so much. You know, Schlatt's assistant." Tubbo smiled, "It's alright Tommy." He said before giving his friend a hug. All was well. "That was easier than I thought." Techno shrugged as he watched the boys embrace, "Bummer, I thought I'd actually get to fight a child." He threw the sword down before walking away. George laughed during the whole situation, they seemed like such a happy family. A sting of jealousy filled up inside him. From seeing Tommy play with a friend, to Wilbur and Niki's hilarious parenting style, he wishes he had grown up like that. "Well I should go." Wilbur told George, "My father's coming in tonight for dinner, and he hasn't done that in a while so it's quite a big deal." George grinned, "Nice meeting you and your family, Wilbur." He got up and brushed the dirt off his jeans, "I hope we'll get to talk again." Wilbur yelled for Tommy, "So do I. Have a nice

day!" He walked toward his son, picking him up and urging Tubbo to follow so he could get back home to his family safe and sound.

# The Sketch

Dream called George to check up on him, and it took a few rings before he picked up. "Hello, Dream." "George." He smiled, "Sorry I couldn't call yesterday, the kids I coach were having a game and it was quite busy." George was confused until he remembered Dream coached baseball, "How was that? Did you win?" Dream gave a hearty laugh, "In all honesty it was a really bad loss." He admitted, "They're quite young and didn't take it well. One of them threw soda at a player from the other team and it caused some trouble between me and the parents." George imagined Dream trying to explain himself to a parent and guiltily, it amused him, "How did that go?" Dream groaned, "They threatened to get me fired. Accused me of being the one to tell the kid to throw the soda. I was getting riled up when one of the players came up to me and told me that the kid was provoked to throw the soda because the rival team called him duck-footed and threw peanuts at him." George laughed, opening the microwave in his room and throwing a bag of instant popcorn inside, "What did they do to the rival team?" Dream sighed, "Nothing. They didn't get in trouble at all but my kid got a suspension from games." "That's quite unfair." George frowned, leaning against the desk and playing with his fingernails. Dream was silent for a while, "Yeah, but I'm gonna work with him privately anyways so he gets practice in and isn't just thrown into the next game when he's back." George smiled, he seemed to really care for the kids on the team, which reminded him of his run-in with Wilbur and his family the day before. "That's sweet of you, Dream. I actually had a hilarious encounter with children as well." "Oh really?" Dream sounded intrigued, "What happened?" The microwave beeped and George put the phone between his cheek and shoulder as he opened it and made to grab the popcorn bag inside, "Well I was having trouble planting your flowers and- ow." He burned his fingers, and decided it was easier to grab it by pinching the corners of the bag instead, "-and a man named Wilbur came over to help me, then I met his family." "Wilbur." Dream thought, "That's quite a nice name." He wrote it down on a sticky note before turning his lips to the phone again, "What happened with his family?" George chuckled at the memory, "His kid was hilarious. He was fighting his friend over a video game disc, and so Wilbur's wife called in his uncle to scare him into

apologizing." "What an interesting way to parent," Dream grinned, "did it work?" "The boy sobbed and practically begged for forgiveness." George laughed before eating some popcorn and collapsing on the chair. "You chew quite loud." Dream told George, and George immediately stopped, amusing Dream even more. George swallowed, "I'm sorry, I forgot how loud it would sound over a phone." Dream shook his head, "No, it's adorable." He said, sort of impulsively but truthfully nonetheless. George was taken aback by that, "I imagine it being a bit annoying, but thank you anyway." Was all he could say. "I never asked you about this, George," Dream began, "but you're obviously British. How did you end up in Florida?" George's first thought was the iconic "If you're from Africa, why are you white?" line from Mean Girls, but he knew Dream wouldn't get the reference so he kept it to himself. "I got a scholarship from a school here," George explained, "I took it, then I got carried away with how much I liked it here. My mom and sister didn't want me to leave but I did so anyway. I finished school and didn't come back home. I stayed with my school friend Alex but he ended up moving to Mexico. Luckily I had a job by then and could pay for this house, and now I'm here." He took in what he just said, realizing at once that his loneliness had one person to blame: himself. "Do you visit home often?" Dream asked, his voice full of genuine interest. George sighed, "No." He replied, "I send cards for holidays and birthdays but the last time I saw them was when I had the argument about living here. They never made an effort to invite me back home anyway so I never tried." "You should try." Dream urged, "They wanted you to stay home in the first place, so why wouldn't they want you there? At least to visit or check up on them." George had never thought about coming home until Dream suggested he do so. He missed his family and he grew up in a loving environment. It was him that isolated himself with his own worries for his future and hard work that cost him a childhood full of friends and connections. It was easy for him to get caught up in work. All he did before he met Dream was work. He'd order take-out, then stay in his house burning his corneas with his massive screen time just doing work. Meeting Dream had pulled him out of his mundane routine of not living, but merely surviving. He had a reason to get off his computer, and for the first time in a long time, he had someone to talk to. He had gone outside and realized how long it had been since he had done anything physically draining when he dug up the time capsule. He had driven to the flower store and met someone new. He had gone outside and spent time trying to plant flowers he didn't know

how to plant, resulting in making a new friend. Dream was the first domino in him living the way he should have been living all of his life, and all he was was a voice on the phone. "George? I'm sorry if I sound like I'm forcing you to go back home, I know nothing about your situation." Dream said after a while, and George felt bad for leaving him in silence while he was busy with his thoughts. George shook his head profusely, "No, no." He assured, "I was just thinking." "About me?" Dream joked. George smiled. His smile had reached his eyes, which since meeting Dream has started happening more often, "Oh yes. Of course, because I just can't stop thinking about you." He responded sarcastically with an eye-roll. "Honesty is the best policy." Dream said matter-of-factly. "You're such," George couldn't even find the words, but he just spoke the first ones that came to mind, "a piece of work." Dream responded with sassy mumbles, which George found so vexing in a good way. "George, what do you look like?" Dream asked. George knew what Dream looked like, but realized that there was no way to show Dream his appearance. "I can describe myself, if you'd like." "Yes," Dream agreed, "Oh! How about this. You describe yourself and I sketch you on the wall. You watch the sketch and tell me how accurate I am." "I love how we normalized ruining the walls." "Oh shut it." Dream countered, "So? Deal?" "Alright, Dream." George gave in, "I guess I can clean the walls later." Dream celebrated, "Just a warning, I'm an amazing artist." George groaned before speaking, "Well I have quite a long face, but I guess it evens itself out. I mean I think my jawline does it justice." George watched and waited, and then an outline of a face started to appear on his wall. A bit cracked and worn with time, but still distinguishable. "I have dark hair. It's straight and cut short at the moment, and sort of bangs but not too long." He looked at his reflection on his locked cell phone, trying his best to describe himself accurately. He watched the drawing, "Oh, a bit longer than that." He instructed, and indeed the sketch of the hair became a bit longer. George expected Dream to do a rushed, joke drawing but surprisingly it had full effort put in. "Tell me about your eyes." Dream said. "My eyes?" George thought for a moment, "They're pretty almond shaped, and my pupils are quite large so they look silly when I look to the side. Oh, and they're brown I believe." Dream started a sketch of the eyes, and they looked a bit bigger than his, but other than that it still looked good. "My eyebrows. I wouldn't say they're thick, but they're not extremely thin either, they're a bit lower and closer to my eyes." George continued, and so did the drawing. "I've no idea how to describe my nose, so

I guess I'll just say medium." "Medium?" Dream chuckled. "Yes." George confirmed. The nose could have used some work, but it didn't make the drawing look bad. "And your lips, George." Dream asked, almost softly, "Describe your lips, they're the last thing." George thought about it for a while, "They're full enough that they don't disappear when I grin." Was the only way he could explain it." The drawing was complete, "So, how is it?" George was a bit amazed to be honest, "It's great! If you put me in a line with people and showed a stranger this drawing and asked them to choose which one of us the drawing was of, they'd pick me." Dream sounded proud of himself after that, "Wow. So I am a great artist. I was just joking about that." "It's not entirely accurate, but that's on me for not explaining well enough." George critiqued. "Maybe the drawing isn't that good, but I did picture you in my imagination, I hope that's more accurate since I tried to match a face to your voice." Dream told him, "You're lucky you have a photo of me." "I am." George said quietly. He meant to say it to himself but obviously that wasn't what happened. Dream laughed, "Damn right you are. I'm a pretty thing to look at aren't I?" "You get so full of yourself sometimes." George said, but inside he deeply agreed. "I get that a lot." Dream admitted proudly, "Anyways, I'm gonna turn in for the night. I have to meet up with my sister to help her with her dumb project, and the drive to her and my mom's place is quite far so I'm waking up early." "Are you staying there?" George asked. "Most likely." Dream sighed, "I'm sorry I probably won't be able to call for the day but I'm sure the day after tomorrow I'm all yours." George smiled, "Alright. Be safe, Dream." "Goodnight, George." Dream bid him, running his fingers on the wall with the sketch of George's face.

# Quite The Man

Usually, when George waited for Dream to call him, he'd occupy himself with his work. He had finished early though so he had nothing to do, and no call to expect since Dream was going to go over to his sister's for a while and leaving the phone at home. He sat in silence in his room for a while before deciding he'd spend the time outside. He had not gone on a walk for a while so he decided it would be best, and also because he knew Dream would get mad at him for not using his free day wisely. He put on a hoodie, pocketed his phone, and trudged downstairs, walking outside onto his porch. He checked the flowers, and as expected nothing had grown yet. It was the scary part about growing flowers, in the beginning you don't know if anything was happening at all yet. He decided he would go to the park. He brought a small notebook and pencil to sketch his surroundings as he used to do with his mother when he was young. He caught sight of the swingset and found a bench close by. He sat down, sighed, and started scratching lines on his notebook. "No Tommy, I told you not to be mean, and you didn't listen."

George heard a woman say. He turned around and saw Niki, scolding Tommy who looked grumpy. "But I want ice cream like Tubbo! It's not fair." He cried, but his mom wasn't letting up. Niki pointed a finger at him, "I told you a million times. Don't be mean to girls! What do you do? You call Cara 'Puffy' until she cried." Tommy's mouth gaped open, "SHE LIKES TO BE CALLED THAT. IT'S HER NICKNAME, MUM!" "Fine then," Niki said, "if that didn't make her cry. What did?" Tommy put his head down in defeat, "I chased her around with a stick and told her if I got close enough I'd poke her." Niki groaned, "Tommy, you can't go around doing that." "She de-deserv- " "Deserves?" Niki finished. "Yes. That word," Tommy pleaded. "Why does she deserve it?" Niki tried to understand her son. Tommy waved his hands, "She's a girl!" Niki sighed and turned away. She caught sight of George on the bench and waved, "Oh, hello! You talked to my husband the other day I believe?" George nodded, "Wilbur. Yes." He smiled at her and then gestures toward Tommy, who had his arms crossed and flared his nose up when he looked at him, "So that little man is still being trouble, I see." Wilbur was walking with Tubbo toward them now. Tubbo looked at Tommy, "Here Tommy, we can split it!" Tommy was trying to stay pretend mad, but

eventually gave in as Tubbo gave him some of his ice cream. Wilbur's eyes glanced at Niki and George talking, "George!" He exclaimed, "Pleasure to see you here." "Hello Wilbur," he greeted, "how was the meet up with your father?" Wilbur thought for a second, "Quite odd. He's constantly refused to come home here but suddenly we get a call saying he's on a flight to Florida and to get the guest room ready." George chuckled, "Dinner go well, though?" Wilbur nodded, "I'd say so. Tommy was a bit shy and weary of him at first, but he warmed up to him when he protected Tommy from uncle Techno." George smiled, "Seemed like a good time." Wilbur shook his head with a grin, "We don't even have a guest room." He rolled his eyes, "He took Niki and I's room and made us sleep with Tommy." "Sounds like a very 'old person' thing to do." George told him, and they both shared a laugh. Wilbur watched George closely, almost as if he was waiting for a certain reaction, but found nothing there. "Oh," Wilbur saw George's book and pencil, "may I borrow your pencil for a moment?" George nodded and handed him the pencil. Wilbur took out his pocket notebook and scratched a few lines on before returning it, "Thank you." George took the pencil, "No problem. What brings you to the park?" Wilbur turned to Niki and then back to George and whispered, "In all honesty, to escape my father." "Is that bad?" George said. "Not necessarily." Wilbur explained, "He lives in England. Obviously I'm a Brit and I was born there, but he wasn't. Anyway that's too long of a story, basically he's moody because he's old and because of jetlag." "I've actually thought about how funny it was that us Brits ended up in a neighborhood a couple houses from each other in Florida." George joked. Wilbur nodded, "Yeah, well," he ate a spoon of ice cream, "dad bought us a house here, said Florida was fun. I mean who'd say no to a house." George was giving what Wilbur said some thought when suddenly, out of nowhere, Techno was walking towards them, pulling at his hair. "You come here to escape him too, Techno?" Wilbur grinned. Techno rolled his eyes, "He keeps wanting me to fight him." He complained, "An old man wanting to fight me." Wilbur turned to George, "Dad and his old friend used to come over and teach us how to fight. We'd fence, kick-box, you name it." George let out a breath of laughter, "Sounds like quite the man." "That he is." Techno said plainly as he picked up an ice cream cup from the table. "Oh Techno," Niki said, and Techno turned toward her, "that's Tubbo's ice cream, he left it there to go play with Tommy." "So I'm stealing from a child?" Techno questioned, "That makes it so much better." George thought he actually was going to steal the ice cream,

but he put it down and sat on the table part of the bench. "So Techno, you're American but I presume you and Wilbur are brothers?" George asked. Techno nodded, "Got used to this country, I guess." "It's an impressive American accent." George complimented "Yeah well, I do it because it sounds better than my British one." Techno admitted with a shrug. "Niki are you sure Tubbo doesn't want this ice cream?" "Let it alone, Techno." Niki scolded, and Techno sighed in defeat, he couldn't win against her. There was a vibration coming from the bench, George checked his phone but it wasn't his, "It's not mine that's ringing, I reckon it's yours." Wilbur checked his back pocket and indeed his phone was ringing, "Oh, it's dad." Techno glanced over, "What does the old man want this time." He said plainly. Wilbur answered, and George could hear faint mumbling. "Mhm." Wilbur said, "Yes, I have, dad. No that's tomorrow, not today. How do I know? Dad you were the one that wrote that date down, how do you not know? Alright that's fine. Bye dad." Techno raised his eyebrows. "He was just uh- checking in on where we went. Said it was a mistake leaving him alone in the house." "Oh no, what did he do to the house." Niki said. "We'll have to see." Wilbur sighed, "We're going to head home now, George. I'm a bit scared as to what he's done to the house, but maybe if we get there earlier enough we can prevent more damage." George laughed, "Alright then. It's getting late and I should probably head home as well." Wilbur smiled, "Sounds good. Have a nice evening, George!" "You and your family as well." George waved them goodbye.

# The First Domino

George woke up the next morning to the sunlight shining through his curtain. It was almost the end of August, but the weather seemed to have been colder than usual in contrast to the bright sunlight. He planned to stay in his room for a bit in case Dream called, but after a while he got hungry and walked outside to make himself some toast and butter with tea. He then went back to his room to eat there, and the phone rang as he walked through the door. He shuffled quickly, putting down the mug with tea and toast on his work desk to answer the phone. "George!" Dream greeted, "I just got home. How are you?" George took a bite of his toast, "Fine. I went to the park yesterday and that was pretty fun. I met up with Wilbur and his family again, and his brother Techno, but they call him Techno." "Techno?" Dream repeated, "I have a close friend nicknamed Techno." George drank some of his tea, "That's a cool coincidence, but I don't know if your Techno is as outlandish as the Techno here." Dream laughed, "Oh yes he is." He said, "Not lately though. He's had cancer for a while but he's fighting." George frowned, "I'm sorry. I'm sure he'll do okay." "I am too." Dream smiled, "Anyway I interrupted a bit there, how was the park?" George thought for a moment, "Well I didn't stay for long, but I do think they're a fun bunch of people I'd consider friends." Dream smiled, "I'm glad you're making friends, I know you said you hardly had any." "Well you're my friend." George reminded him. Dream was silent, "Well, I mean a friend from your time, you know?" George sighed, "You're right." "I didn't mean it like that," Dream softened, "you're one of my most important friends. The only other friend I feel a connection with other than Sapnap." "You said you went to the park yesterday?" Dream asked after a while to break any tension. "Yeah." "The 29th?" Dream asked to make sure. "Yes." George replied, "Why do you ask?" Dream was silent, "Uh- I don't know. Just to make sure that we are still in the same month and day." "Yeah but," George let out a breath of a laugh, "we're a bit off on the year." Dream shook his head with a smile "'A bit.'" George heard scribbling from Dream's end of the phone. "Are you drawing?" Dream hesitated, "N-no. I'm writing." "What are you writing?" George asked, intrigued. "Just some stuff." Was all Dream could say, and George just hummed in response. "So how was helping your sister?" George wanted to hear all about Dream's day. Especially since

they didn't get a chance to talk the night before. "It was pretty fun," he admitted, "she gets quite annoying but she's like a mini-me, so I can't blame her." "Wow. A girl Dream." George pondered, "Scary." "She can be scary." Dream said gleefully, "She was going to punch me in the face for holding her diary and asking what it was. She does karate, too." "Well then, you shouldn't touch diaries." George said sassily. "Ha ha." Dream went quiet, "I missed you. It was only a day but I missed talking to you, if that doesn't sound weird." George's eyes widened a bit, unsure how to respond. He thought it best to just be honest, "I missed you too." "Yeah well me being gone got you out of the house right?" Dream brought up with a smile. He noticed how much more open George was to be less isolated lately. He knew how much he was committed to work more than the simple things in life, so it was a nice change. George leaned against the wall, finishing his last piece of toast, "Yeah. I haven't done that in a while." "Are you saying I should disappear more often?" Dream joked, in a trying voice. "No!" George answered loudly, then cleared his throat, "I just meant it's good to get a bit of sunlight every few days, and I only went outside because I didn't have any more work to do." "Mhm, you just want me gone." Dream was pushing jokingly, "I'm an old man anyway, what can I do for your life." "Stop joking." George said seriously, "You've done much for my life. More in one month than most people have in years." Dream was taken aback at the serious and heartfelt response to his stupid joke. "So have you, George. You don't even know."

# Fact From Fiction

Reckon it can survive fifty years right?"

"I don't know," George said truthfully, "buried in the backyard sitting through fifty years worth of sprinklers and rain?"

"Hm," Dream came up with an idea, "I have an idea but it involves ruining the walls again."

George made a sound indicating he was tired of all the wall ruining, when in reality he didn't mind, "What is it?"

George heard knocking on the phone,

"It seems pretty thick. Maybe I can cut out a little place to keep the box in. I can also use it to send you more items as well." George sighed,

"Alright, try." Dream took out a red swiss army knife and pulled out the small blade, cutting through the wall and coughing through the dust that emerged.

George watched as the cracks appeared on his wall, right next to the sketch of his face. Nothing in the house had been changed since 1970, but most of the items were either stolen or taken with the last people who lived with the house (presumably Dream), so leaving stuff out wouldn't have worked.

Dream had successfully cut a square into the wall, and surprisingly the inside was hollow and full of old insulation. He looked under his bed and found the Walkman box, putting it into the space and covering the wall up again.

"Done." He announced.

George made to push the wall open but realized the cracks had grown enough mold to seal it shut again. He knocked on it before punching it repeatedly.

"Woah there"

Dream asked through the phone, "you alright?"

"Yeah," George punched again,

"Just- need- to- YES!"

The square cutout of the wall had fallen through, and George was met with a cloud of dust and a smell that was quite foul. He bravely put his hand in the space and patted the area until his hands found the old box. The box was a bit dirty, but when he opened it the contents were still mint condition. It was crazy, the things that could survive fifty years.

"Thank you, Dream."

"No problem, George," Dream smiled, "do you know how to use it is the question."

"Nope." George eyed the device, trying to figure it out.

It was quite embarrassing how much knowledge he lacked in old technology. Dream had walked him through how to use it until George finally got the tape in and pressed play. The first few seconds of Unchained Melody played, but he was more curious as to what the other songs on the tape were. He asked Dream how to skip a song, and after being taught, he skipped. He held it up to the phone as the first notes of a song started to exert from the Walkman.

"I Will by The Beatles!" Dream exclaimed, "I've been meaning to add that to a tape, I love that song. Will I wait a lonely lifetime? If you want me to, I will." He sang, and George let the song play until the end since Dream enjoyed it so much.

They had listened to each and every song on the tape, with Dream knowing most of them and singing along. George enjoyed hearing him sing, because amidst the jokingly sung lyrics was a great singing voice. The singing had made both of them sleepy eventually, and as they both said goodnight and hung up the phone, they lay in their beds, deprived of their one muse once again.

Little did George Davidson know that in the grass of his small front yard, a leaf blooms out of the packed soil, ready to live.

# Time Can Do So Much

It was 7:58 PM, and the phone was ringing. George had awoken from his nap (that had gone on a bit longer than he initially planned) and ran to pick up. "Dream!" He exclaimed, a little too enthusiastic than he normally would greet. He had almost knocked the phone over because he had tugged on the cord a little too much. There was a small scuffling before Dream responded, "Hello, George." He sat down, "I'm sorry I didn't call yesterday, or if you got worried. Sapnap just went through this horrible breakup with his girlfriend of two years, and I was over at his place trying to soothe his troubles." George had never known what it was like to have his heart broken, mostly because he's never had someone to break it. He fidgeted with the phone cord and pulled the small table with the phone closer to him, "How is he holding up?" He asked, "I know romantic pain can have quite lasting effects." Dream sniggered a little, which confused George as to what he found funny, "'Quite lasting effects'" Dream mimicked in a horrible impression of a British accent, "I like that. Anyway he's not in the best place right now but he's a tough guy, he'll get out of it soon. The girl was a big jerk anyway." George had seen his old roommate Alex go through a breakup once before. He had been a rightful mess and hadn't eaten or slept well for weeks. He saw the cost of love if it didn't work out, it could change even the strongest and happiest of people. Of course George didn't get why it affected him so badly, or why it was something ever worth crying over.

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Alex had pulled the beanie off his head and collapsed on the gray, tattered sofa. He threw the beanie across the room and dug his hands forcefully into his hair. "She made me a promise, you know. She made so many promises and I was the one who was weary of them but you know what? I promised anyway." He turned to look at George, who's eyes were like lasers on his crumbling friend, "She made me promise and she goes ahead and becomes the one to break them. Why make promises you can't keep? It's bull." George was a bit scared to approach him in such a fragile state, but he picked up his cat Luca off the sofa and onto the floor, and sat down next to Alex. "I-" He

tried to begin, "I'm sorry, but I don't understand how you can be so angry at her for that but still love her at the same time. I'd expect you to be more cautious of feeling anything for her again." "You don't understand, George," Alex sniffled and made to wipe his nose with his jacket, but George quickly leaned over to grab a tissue from the box in the center of the table in front of them, "Thank you." He said as he took the tissue from George, "Being mad at someone you love is almost always never enough for you to stop loving them. You can't spend so much of your time building a home for someone in your heart just to evict them all in ten seconds." George nodded but still couldn't bring himself to understand, "If I were you, I'd have just tried to forget about her." "That doesn't happen right away." Alex explained, "It takes time. Trust me George, one day you'll realize just how much of a villain time can be." "What do you mean?" "You can only go so long without having been hurt by love. When you're older and you experience it all for the first time, you get hurt more. You're not used to it, you don't know what to do, and you don't know who to blame. Everyone is going to tell you that time heals all wounds but in your head you're just thinking, 'all time does is throw salt on them', you feel all these things more because you've never been hurt before, and you'll come to get angry at the person who did it to you because they're the first to have done so." Alex tried his best to let out while tears still fell down his face. George felt horrible. He was supposed to be the supportive friend, and Alex was the one helping him as if he was the one who just got heartbroken. George promised himself to remember Alex's words. To be prepared. He would prove that all you need to do to let the pain subside was to forget about it. Time did heal all wounds, but he wouldn't let anything wound him.

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"George? Did you hang up?" Dream had broken through his wall of thoughts, and he immediately shook his head. "No I'm here." He responded, letting a heavy breath he held in his chest come out. "I hope Sapnap realizes she was a jerk and moves on." Dream agreed with a chuckle, "So do I, George." He pulled open the curtains to let in the shine of the streetlights onto his bedroom floor, "Did you work yesterday when I didn't call? Were you worried?" "I didn't really worry," George said, not very truthfully, "well I did, but I know you have a life and you can't spend every night on the phone with someone from the future." "Well when you put it like that," Dream chortled, "I quite

enjoy talking to you. I'd happily spend every night on the phone with someone from the future." George didn't know why that sentence stung so badly in his chest, but he ignored the feeling and gave a weak laugh. "And you say I'm the one who can't get enough of you." Dream put his chin in the palm of his hand, "Just know George that I'm not a very good liar. So when I said that..."

George could hear his smile through the phone, and rolled his eyes. He wished Dream was next to him so he could slap him on the shoulder for saying such a bold thing. "You want me to be obsessed with you so bad." "I do. I want you to join the club, there's plenty of others that are," Dream joked bravely, "but never mind my fan club. How are you?" George contemplated his answer for a bit. "Not much, honestly. I waited for your calls for a bit, though." Dream gave a defeated sigh, "I truly am sorry. Sapnap gets hit harder than most with this kind of stuff, so it was sort of an emergency. I got home at like three in the morning and I didn't want to potentially wake you." "Good decision." George told him, "I'm not a very fun person when woken up."

Dream was cackling maniacally. "Now I know what to do to drive you up the wall. Expect calls in the wee hours of the morning from now on." George let go of the phone cord he was wrapping around his finger because he had absentmindedly cut off some of his circulation. "If you do that, Dream, I'll- I- " "You'll what?" Dream tested, "You're gonna come over to my house to beat me up? Oh wait, you're already in my house. Might I even add our situation in which we are separated by?" George wanted to bang his head into the table, "You're so sassy. You're sassier than my sister, and that's saying something." "Nice alliteration," Dream complimented, angering George even more, "rolled off the tongue nicely, all those s's." "Just shut up already." George begged, but he was finding everything quite amusing and Dream could tell. "What are you up to right now?" Dream was sitting on his stool, shaking his leg, "Wondering whether I should take time to organize my cassettes or leave them in a heaping mess as they are now and go to sleep." George smiled when Dream said "cassettes", as he knew music worked a different way then it did now. Sure it was accessible, but not nearly as much as it is in his time. "I say you organize them, if you have a lot." Dream eyed the four baskets full of the cassettes and raised his eyebrows, "Organize them it is." He decided, "but I'll do it tomorrow instead. This might take a whole day." "Alright," George said quietly, "what are you going to do instead, then?" Dream caught sight of his Les Paul in the corner of the room and made to grab it. "I reckon I can practice guitar. I learned a new song the other day." "Ooh," George

melted a little when Dream mentioned he had played guitar. He had always wanted to get better at it himself, and found people who could play instruments interesting, "may I hear?" Dream hesitated but agreed, "I'm not the best, but I'll try. It's going to be a softer version though, since I think it fits the song better." He cleared his throat, and George leaned in closer to the phone to listen. Dream strummed a chord, "Woah, my love, my darling I've hungered for your touch A long, lonely time" George was a bit surprised at how beautiful Dream's singing voice was. He knew of the song because of his grandpa, but agreed that the song did sound better when it was sung softly, or just in general preferred it in Dream's voice. "And time goes by so slowly And time can do so much Are you still mine?" George listened on, closing his eyes and imagining Dream sitting cross legged on the floor, with the phone near him strumming his guitar in his echo-y bedroom. The very same bedroom he was in now. The thought that Dream had sat in the same place he was now, singing to him sent tingles though his body. "Lonely rivers flow To the sea, to the sea To the open arms of the sea, yeah Lonely rivers sigh 'Wait for me, wait for me' I'll be coming home, wait for me" George took in the lyrics. He had never really cared to listen to what the song was saying, and he regretted never doing so. The words were so bittersweet and desperate that he could almost hear himself saying them. "I need your love God speed your love to me" There was silence after Dream strummed his last chord. "Are you there?" George turned to the phone, "Yeah. Just, wow- I didn't expect that." "You thought I was going to suck, didn't you." Dream teased. "No!" George exclaimed, "I meant your speaking voice is different from your singing voice. It's softer and it fits the song. Also your guitar playing is really good." "Thank you." Dream said as he put his guitar back on the stand in the corner, "I messed up a few times but other than that yeah, I really like this song. I've had it on repeat lately and I learned the chords by myself." "What's the song called, Dream?" George had asked, yawning slightly. "Unchained Melody by The Righteous Brothers." George took his cellphone and made to add the song to a playlist when he realized it didn't really fit any of his existing ones. He instead created a new one, calling it "Flowers from 1970" in reference to Dream, and added the song to that. He also made a mental note to find more songs to fit the playlist and to play it out loud to Dream over the phone someday when he considered it finished. "I tried guitar, it's really hard," George put down his cellphone, "so that's quite impressive, especially that you learned yourself." Dream was glad that George admired

his playing and singing. No one knew he did so, not even Sapnap. He just told Sapnap that he had the guitar as a gift but never played, when secretly he'd spent hours in his room practicing for hours on end. Having someone to hear the results of his hard work and find it impressive meant a lot to him. "Are these kinds of songs still a thing?" Dream asked, "Or is that something else you think you shouldn't tell me." George thought for a moment, "Well I know of them, and so do a good amount of people, but other than that they're not really playing everywhere much anymore." "Hmm," Dream found that interesting, especially since his parents just adored the Beach Boys and made sure he and his sisters knew every song, "bummer, they're quite good." "I don't know much of the discography from your time but you can make me a list of songs to try and listen to and I'll educate myself on them more." George offered, and Dream's heart warmed at how George became interested in one of his favorite artists. "I will soon, but unfortunately now I am sleepy and I think I should turn in for the night." Dream yawned loudly. "Goodnight Dream." George felt empty after saying it, but knew he had more nights to talk to him and that he shouldn't be possessive over his time. "Goodnight, George," Dream replied, "and don't forget to check on those flowers." He added. George smiled before hanging up the phone and laying on his bed. He played the playlist he made for dream on repeat, which only included one song, so he fell asleep to the song on repeat.

# A Plane Ticket

Dream could have taken advantage of George's calls. He could ask for the winners of future sports games and bet on them to become rich. He could ask for the secrets to the future and use it for personal gain. But what did Dream want? All he wanted was to talk to George. Given the opportunity to speak to someone fifty years ahead of him, and all he wanted to do was to talk to a lonely boy who's never had someone care about him the way he did. Dream never had intentions that helped himself. Maybe in the beginning his curiosity led to longing for more answers but after getting to know George all of that disappeared and was replaced by what he saw as a beautiful friendship. These phone calls were their little secrets. Their few hours in the dark, gloomy nights to relax and be themselves to someone who would comfort and laugh with them. It was something the both of them had gotten used to. — — —

George had woken up groggy having slept in an uncomfortable position all night. He made to check the time on his phone but realized it had died due to the song playing on his phone during the night. He groaned and got up, almost falling over but catching himself on time. He decided to get breakfast and go for a walk since it was such a nice day outside, and it'd be perfect since his phone would be charged by that time. After eating a couple leftovers and brushing his teeth, he ran back to his room to his phone, unplugging it before going back downstairs. The sun was newly risen and illuminated the neighborhood in such a way that everyone who took the time to step outside would consider it the perfect day. George continued to his usual routine of checking the planted flowers. He patted the soil, "Nothing yet, I guess." He told himself, sighing before getting up and walking across the newly sprinkled grass, water slightly seeping through the material of his shoes but not enough to throw him off the course of his good day. No plans had been made, and George was going nowhere in particular. He decided it was better to walk than drive, because his cardio had been awful and something he needed to work on. Town Square was a close enough walk that it was bearable, but also far enough to get some good exercise in. It housed various shops and restaurants, including Karl's flower store. In fact, George had not been back to town square since he had gone to Karl's store. It was a fifteen

minute walk, and he took his time because he liked listening to songs during walks, so he'd walk to the beat of the music, which in this case were slower. Once he arrived, he had not been hungry so he skipped over the small cafes and fast food places, and explored the stores he had never seen before. There was an old, sort of run down arcade that still attracted lots of kids and adults who longed for a hint of nostalgia, a shop for teas that had free taste testing (which George had a blast in), and other hidden gems George had never known about. While he was walking, he had stepped on a piece of gum on the floor. He made a disgusted face as he lifted his shoe up and the gum stretched up off the concrete with it. He kicked his shoe on the pavement, attempting to peel it off. After he had successfully cleaned his shoe, he looked up and saw a small door to his left. He never would have seen it if he hadn't had stopped in front of the door. It was a bookstore, with the paint on its windows missing some letters due to peeling. George was immediately drawn to it, walking mindlessly inside as a cowbell rang when the door opened. It was much bigger than what he had expected after seeing it from the outside. There were aisles that housed not only books, but music as well. Including records, cassettes, and CD's. The thing that caught his eye, though, was who was behind the counter. It was Techno. He was bagging a book for a customer, thanking them for their purchase and after seeing they had a child, he included a sheet of stickers and a bookmark. His true colours were showing. He didn't really hate children. George walked over confidently, and Techno didn't notice him until he was right in front of the counter. He was still toying with the cash register, looking down. "Hello wh—" Techno looked up and saw it was George, "George. I've never seen you here before." George looked around, eyebrows raised, "Well, I've never been here before." Techno nodded, "I know. I usually get the same customers and I know them all by now, so seeing you here is a surprise." George eyed the shelves behind the counter, promoting new arrivals and books who's stock were low. On a book stand was a book called "The Art of War", almost proudly displayed in the center of the top shelf. "So you work here, that's a cool thing." Techno chuckled lightly, "I own this place." He clarified, and George was shocked and impressed at the same time. Techno's appearance never gave off an energy that implied he worked at such a place. "How'd you get it?" George asked, "Did you buy it yourself?" The pink highlighted haired man shook his head, the fang earring hanging on his left ear jingling as he did so, "Dad owned it." He explained, gesturing to the big store around him, "Wilbur never

was one for reading books, but I was an English major and he knew I did, so he left it all to me after he retired instead."The people in George's life never failed to surprise him. Who would have thought this intimidating man was an English Major who ended up owning a bookstore? He never knew how lovely it was to ask and get to know about other people for the first time. "Business seems well, that's quite impressive." "It's steady, yeah," Techno shrugged, "I'm saving up money for a few things while trying to keep this place runnin'." "Saving money for what?" George inquired curiously. "A new computer for Tommy, he spilled coke on it. Wilbur's been needing help with money for buying a new car, so that's something too. And-" He hesitated for a bit, "A plane ticket." George found it sweet how his first few options for purchases involved Wilbur and Tommy, but wanted to learn more about the plane ticket. "A plane ticket? Do you want to go on vacation?" "No." Technoplayed with the cash register some more, "Do not mention this to Wilbur, but I'm actually in a relationship with someone." George raised his eyebrows up and down with a smile, "They live in a state near here?" "Ha," Techno laughed, "not even close." If only Techno knew how much George had related to him. Both had someone they cared about far away from them. The only difference was all Techno had to do was buy a plane ticket, while George's situation was a bit more complicated than his. "I hope it works out for you then, Techno." George turned around to check if there were customers waiting in line, in case he had been clogging it up. After seeing no one, he added, "I'll go look for some books, I've been meaning to start reading more." Techno agreed, and proceeded to help a customer that had just arrived.

George picked up two books that had piqued his interest, and made to pay for them when he saw the cassette aisle. He walked over, checking them out. He had no cassette player, but he knew Dream liked cassettes so he wanted to see what they had in stock. He pulled some out, there were some Elvis Presley ones, Doris day, and also every Beatles and Beach Boys album. When he reached the R lettered section, he pulled out each cassette, reading the names until he reached one with no design, just "Unchained Melody by The Righteous Brothers+ more" written in thick, black pen on its white label. George was giddy, and though he did not own anything that could play the cassette, he decided to purchase it anyway to tell Dream about later. He once again met Techno at the counter, who counted up his total price. "You forgot this." George told him, pushing the cassette toward him. Techno picked it up, eyeing it, "Good choice," he told George, "haven't heard this one in a while."

"You've heard it?" "If you're talking about this particular tape, then yes." Techno nodded, handing it back to him, "I've heard every song on it. A lot of the records and cassettes are our own stock." George took the tape back, "You forgot to charge me." he chuckled. Techno shrugged, "Nah. Take it. We have a hard time getting cassettes out since people don't buy them anymore. You're probably the first in months." George smiled and thanked the man. He took all his stuff and waved goodbye. Techno gave a salute with two fingers as he walked out the door.

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Later that night, George sat on his bed reading one of the new books he had purchased. The phone was kept plugged in and close by him, waiting out the last few minutes before Dream was scheduled to call. He only got a few paragraphs of the chapter he was on before the phone started ringing. George looked around for anything he could use to mark his place in the book, as dog-earing pages had always been a pet peeve of his. He found an old food receipt and stuck it between the pages before making to answer the phone. "George, how's my favorite guy from 2020?" Dream greeted, his voice a little raspy. George furrowed a brow in thought, "Are you talking to me?" He asked sarcastically, making Dream laugh. "Don't remember having talked to anyone else from 2020 lately, so I assume so.." They both chortled a bit more before settling down. They had talked about each others day. Dream spoke about how he managed to argue the kid he was coaching out of suspension and getting the rival team some sort of punishment, resulting in getting cussed at by a few angry parents as he walked past them with his head high, paying them no mind while spinning his baseball bat. "Were you actually that confident?" George questioned him skeptically, and Dream scoffed. "You said it yourself." He shrugged, "I'm so full of myself." "Don't forget me mentioning how obsessed you are with me." George added, and Dream was a little surprised at this newfound confidence. "Y-yeah." Dream let out a small breath, "Where would this old man be without you?" He pushed the joke, knowing it was the best way to respond without seeming too weakened by the statement. George caught sight of the cassette tape he had bought on his desk, "Oh Dream," he said, "I found a cassette of the song you sang last night." "Ooh," Dream was interested, "play it out loud." George scratched the back of his head awkwardly, "Yeah.. I don't actually have anything to play it

with."Dream was silent for a moment, "Would you like a walkman?" He asked, "I have an extra one still in the box, I reckon it can survive fifty years right?" "I don't know," George said truthfully, "buried in the backyard sitting through fifty years worth of sprinklers and rain?" "Hm," Dream came up with an idea, "I have an idea but it involves ruining the walls again." George made a sound indicating he was tired of all the wall ruining, when in reality he didn't mind, "What is it?" George heard knocking on the phone, "It seems pretty thick. Maybe I can cut out a little place to keep the box in. I can also use it to send you more items as well."George sighed, "Alright, try." Dream took out a red swiss army knife and pulled out the small blade, cutting through the wall and coughing through the dust that emerged. George watched as the cracks appeared on his wall, right next to the sketch of his face.

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# The Time's Torture

Wilbur Soot had texted George at six in the morning, asking for his help.

Wilbur: Hello, George. I do apologize that this text finds you so early in the morning, but I would like to ask a favour. Are you busy today? George: It's no problem, I woke up early anyway but no I don't have any plans as far as I know

George was curious as to what the favor was. He thought it might have been an invitation to something at first but from how semi-serious Wilbur's tone was, he knew that wasn't the case. Wilbur: Are you good with kids?

George: I'm not horrible I guess Why? Wilbur: Would you be able to watch over Tommy? I know he can be a handful but my family and I have found ourselves in a sort of emergency and all the adults are needed. George: Is everything ok?

Also yes, I reckon can watch Tommy Wilbur: I'm going to be honest, I'm quite unsure There's a lot going on right now, I've taken a work leave and Techno's even closed his store for the rest of the week We all just hope everything will be fine Thank you for your concern, we appreciate it

George: No problem I hope everything turns out ok, whatever it is but anyway, would you like to bring Tommy here? or should I go to yours?

Wilbur: Is it alright if you come to ours? He's easier to take care of when he's entertained and out of your hair All of the stuff he has to entertain him is here

George: Yeah sounds good I can be there in an hour? Wilbur: That works out Thank you again, we definitely owe you one. George plugged his phone in while he went to the kitchen to make himself a bowl of cereal (as it was the fastest to make and eat).

After that he rushed to wash his face and change out of his pajamas. Finishing faster than he expected, he asked Wilbur if he could come earlier than he had planned. Wilbur said it was actually convenient, since he, Niki, and Techno were leaving soon. It took a couple turns and attempts to find their house in the neighborhood, but after George spotted the number painted on the curbside, he parked on the side of the road before locking his car and knocking at the door. The house was decorated

beautifully on the outside, with the roof lined in hanging flowers, a white archway on the path to the door, and wind chimes that sang together as the last of the warm summer wind blew on them. The door in front of him opened, revealing Niki. "George!" She gave him a hug, surprising him but he found himself hugging back, "I'm sorry this was so last minute." George

dropped his keys on accident, and he leaned down to pick them up before looking to Niki again, "No, no. You've been great company to me lately and this is something I feel like I owe you." "Oh don't be silly," Niki smiled, "you don't owe us anything for friendship." Wilbur walked up behind her, carrying a small backpack of things. His eyes looked dreadful. They were baggy and dark, and the amount of hours he had slept the previous night could be determined by his face alone. "George, good to see you." He greeted, patting him on the shoulder, "Thank you for coming by so early. Tommy is up in his bedroom right now, still asleep. He wakes up in around ten minutes." Wilbur gave Niki the backpack to load into the car, where Techno was already sitting at the steering wheel waiting for them. Wilbur led George inside, showing him where everything was kept and also where he had put Tommy's meals (which were pre-prepared for George's convenience). He urged him to not hesitate to call if there was an emergency, and that he could eat whatever he wanted from their kitchen if he should ever get hungry. "That should be it," Wilbur told him as he led George into the living room, "the TV and computer is all yours to use too. The TV has a password lock on Youtube since we found out he was finding content he shouldn't have been watching. It's written on the back of the cable box." George was amused, wondering what in the world Tommy had found on Youtube that caused his family to restrict him from it permanently. "Thank you, Wilbur. I think I can manage. When's his bedtime? Does he ever nap?" Wilbur's eyes widened as he shook his head, "We can never get him to nap, so we just make him sleep early. Hopefully we'll be back before he has to sleep for the night, though." "Sounds good," George took note, "I hope wherever you guys are heading off to is well for you, and that everything turns out fine." Wilbur was getting teary-eyed, managing to grin, he said, "We hope so too. I'll be off now, make sure to double lock the doors." George nodded in understanding, and after Wilbur had walked out, he had locked both locks on the door. He heard footsteps coming from the stairs and found Tommy, rubbing his eyes with his nubby hands and spotting George. "Mum and Dad left already?" "Yes," George told him, "you just missed them, but they said goodbye while you slept." Tommy nodded, "Can I play computer?" He asked hopefully, but George had to sadly say no. "Your dad said you could after breakfast, but only for an hour." "He lets me after I finish my worksheets too." Tommy let him know, and George nodded with a smile. "He did mention that, yes." George then went to the kitchen to get him his breakfast, "What do you want to eat?" Tommy made a

thinking face, "I want to mix every cereal we have in the kitchen. Dad never lets me do that, but if you let me I won't tell him." Tommy said cheerfully, hoping he'd get his way. George contemplated it for a second before deciding it would be best to get on the kid's good side, in case it might help later if he got fussy, "Okay." "Except the one with raisins." Tommy made a disgusted face, "That's mom's cereal and it sucks." George chuckled, "I'll make sure to skip that box, then." Tommy had sat down finishing his last few bites of franken-cereal before running up to his room, "Want to come? I can show you my cool house in Minecraft!" George followed after him, nearly slipping on the stairs because of his socks. Tommy led him into a bedroom, where the door had a sign that read "Boys only (Except for mum). George laughed before going inside the boy's room. He had many figurines and posters of various things he enjoyed. There were lots of Zelda posters, Animal Crossing amiibos, and every Minecraft mob figurine sitting on a little shelf above his bed. "Wow you have every mob," George told him, impressed, "I don't see a ghast though." Tommy furrowed his brow, "I do have a ghast. Look." Tommy flicked off the lights in his room and pressed a button on a small remote, illuminating a lantern above his bed. The lantern was a Ghast, and George had to admit it was quite awesome. Tommy turned on the lights again before booting up his computer. "Someone bought me a new computer. I don't know who it was but Uncle Techno delivered it." George remembered Techno mentioning he would have liked to get Tommy a new computer after he spilled Coke on his old one, "Maybe Uncle Techno got it." "No," Tommy shook his head, "he wouldn't." Tommy and George had played Minecraft, and Tommy had even taught George how to call Tubbo so he could play with them. They argued a lot but George could tell they were best friends, and no amount of conflict could be unresolved between them. Tubbo had to go because his parents told him he had to finish his math practice, which reminded George of Tommy's computer limit. "You have 5 more minutes." He reminded the boy, who surprisingly nodded in agreement. "Do you know where my Mum and Dad went?" Tommy asked. George shook his head sadly, "No." "Oh." Tommy said, "I do. They went to the doctors." "Oh no," George said, concerned, "is everyone alright?" "Can I tell you a secret?" Tommy asked, pausing his game and turning around to face George. "Sure, kid." "I get up at night to play computer when I'm supposed to be sleeping. I lock my door and Mum and Dad never see me." George laughed, "Better not get caught doing that." "Don't worry I don't." The boy said confidently, "Anyway

I was playing Minecraft in the night when I heard everyone going crazy outside. I thought people came, maybe my Aunt Alyssa had come to visit us. I do like Aunt Alyssa. I peeked outside my room and saw my Dad running downstairs and when I looked out the window he was driving away." George didn't want to be nosy and use the boy to get knowledge from, but curiosity got the best of him, "Where did he go?" "I think the doctors. But I tip-toed outside and mum was on the couch sad and Dad and Grandpa were not there." Tommy said before turning off his computer, "Do I have to do my worksheets now?" George thought about what the boy had told him before nodding his head, "Yes, then you can play again after." "Okay." He looked disappointed but made to finish his work anyway. He had helped Tommy sharpen his pencils when his phone had started ringing. It was Wilbur, "Hey, Wilbur." "Hello George." Wilbur greeted, "He being a good kid?" "Yes," he answered honestly, "he's doing his worksheets now." "Wow, it's hard for us to get him to do that. Good job." Wilbur laughed. "Is everything okay now?" "It is for now," Wilbur sounded relieved, "I mean that the situation has stabilized, but we're still unsure." "I'm glad it's fine for now." "Can I speak with Tommy?" Wilbur asked, and George said yes, handing Tommy the phone. He put down his pencil, "Hi Dad." "Hello Tommy. What did you have for breakfast?" Tommy's eyes widened as he looked to George, who had a smile on his face, "I had.. cereal, dad." "Really? What kind?" "T-the," Tommy stuttered, "the raisin ones." "Oh, but you hate that cereal." Wilbur said skeptically. "Sorry I can't talk, Dad. I'm doing work." He said before scrambling to hand the phone back to George. "Did he mix every cereal?" Wilbur asked George. "..Yes." George told him honestly, and Wilbur started laughing. "Don't worry, at least now he's done it and he won't ask again. I have to go for now, but I think we should be back in an hour or two. That's what it's looking like. I was just checking in." "Alright, bye Wilbur." George ended the call, "Tommy, your dad's gonna be back soon." "Okay." Tommy looked up from his paper, "Will Grandpa be back too?" "I don't know, he never mentioned if your Grandpa would. Sorry, kid." Tommy nodded his head slowly, "I like Grandpa. He shows me a lot of things." "Such as?" "He showed me how to kick-box, and he also showed me how to fight Uncle Techno." Tommy said proudly, flexing his little arms. "He seems like a very fun Grandpa." George said, highly amused by the young child in front of him striking hero poses. "He is," Tommy scribbled numbers onto his math worksheet, "he tells me stories too." "I heard he likes telling stories," George

remembered Wilbur and Techno mentioning it, "what did he tell?" "I know they're fake, but Dad believes them. He said he had 'evidence'." Tommy did air quotes, "What does that word mean, George?" "It means proof." "What's the word 'proof' mean, then?" Tommy raised a brow. "Never mind." George smiled. "I'm done with my worksheets, but I'm hungry." Tommy stacked his papers and put them in a little folder, "Can I eat lunch early?" George didn't see a problem with that, "I suppose so, come on." They went down to the kitchen, and George heated up Tommy's lunch. He also found another box of the same meal, with "George, if you ever get hungry." written on a sticky note. He heated it up as well and they both ate together. "My dad plays music while we eat." Tommy gestured over to a shelf with a bluetooth speaker, records, and cassette tapes. "Can you play Bruno Mars?" George agreed, trying to connect his cellphone to the speaker, and after a few failed attempts managed to play Bruno Mars on it. Tommy was drumming his hands on the table in between bites, which George found amusing. He was some kid. "Has it been an hour yet?" "Not yet," George checked his phone for the time, "fifteen more minutes." "Time sucks. It goes so slowly." Tommy crossed his arms. George had never agreed with a six year old child more. "Do you miss your mum and dad that bad?" "No." Tommy answered, and George almost spit his food out laughing, "I mean I do miss them but I wanted to ask Dad for a new game when he's back, that's all." Tommy had finished eating, and George made to wash their spoons and throw out the food boxes. Tommy told George he would play Minecraft and call Tubbo again, and that George was allowed to watch TV in the living room if he wanted. George found the fact that Tommy bossed him around very amusing, he was a very outlandish child. He had decided to go upstairs with Tommy anyway, so when Wilbur and Niki came back he didn't look like he was careless and left Tommy by himself. A doorbell rang throughout the house, and Tommy told Tubbo he'd be back, before muting himself and running down to the door. He couldn't reach the second lock, so he gestured for George to hurry up and open it for him. Wilbur and Niki stood at the door, with Techno pulling out of the driveway. Niki gave Tommy a hug, "Did you have fun?" "Yes." Tommy told her, "I like George. He plays Minecraft." Niki looked at George proudly, "I'm glad you had fun Tommy." She sniffed the air in the house, "I assume you ate already then? That's good." "Yes I'm full, Mum," Tommy turned to his dad, "Where is Grandpa? Is he still in the car?" Wilbur knelt down beside his son, "Actually, Grandpa's going to be staying at the doctors for now, Tom." "Why? Did he

forget to eat apples? Mum said they keep the doctor away." Niki gave a small smile toward her son, "No Tommy, he just has to be with the doctor for now, but you know him, he's strong. He'll be back home to play with you again soon." "Oh okay!" Tommy exclaimed, "If he's going to be back, then that's okay." He and his Mum walked toward his bedroom, as Niki wanted to check on the work he had done. Wilbur walked over to George, holding bills in his hand. George waved the money away, "No, no. Please, you don't have to pay me." Wilbur gave him the money anyway, "We owe it to you." George hesitantly took the money and pocketed it. "Is your father okay?" Wilbur let a breath of air out of his mouth, blowing the hair on the top of his head slightly, "We don't know. He's usually physically capable and healthy but this came out of nowhere. He said he always saw it coming, though. That time's running out." George was a little saddened that his father could say such a thing, "I can't promise anything, but I hope it passes and everything will be okay with him." "I know you do." Wilbur said quietly. "I should head home." George told him, "I want to try and get some work done early." Wilbur thanked him again for taking care of Tommy and waved him goodbye as he drove out.

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"Who knew you'd be good with kids." Dream chuckled. It was night time and they had been on the phone together again. "What's that supposed to mean? I have a little sister, you know." "I know." Dream smiled, "Just didn't expect that, that's all." "Well I guess I expected it coming from you, Mr. I coach baseball for children." George mocked jokingly. Dream collapsed on his bed, staring blankly at the ceiling, "Kids are cool, I guess." "Some are, yeah." George responded, collapsing on his bed as well, "So what did you do today?" "I drove out to my mom's again, it's far but I drove back home anyway." "What did you do there?" George asked. "Helped her organize her books. She has so many, and she wants to sell them soon." Dream explained, turning to lay on his side.. George played with his fingernails, "That's a good way to make money." "Yeah." Dream agreed, "I missed you, George." "Again?" George asked, "It's been one day." "Yes well still, it's nice having someone to talk to after a long day." Dream admitted. George agreed, he did miss Dream as well. He wished he could hang out with him the way he hung out with Wilbur and his family, easily accessible. He wished there was a way for them to be closer, but their type of distance was different than the

normal. "Dream," he exhaled, "I completely missed you too." Dream smiled, putting them in another round of silence. "Clay." He said after a while.

"What?" "My name," Dream said, "it's Clay." George was surprised. He had forgotten he had never known Dream's real name. He had gotten so used to the nickname. "Can I still call you Dream?" Dream laughed, "Of course you can," he permitted, "I like the way you say it, anyways." George felt flattered, "Thank you, Dream." Dream closed his eyes, imagining a world in which time had given them a chance. Dream finally came to accept that through these calls, these talks, these little back and forths with George, he had fallen for him. It was subtle but there. Inevitably when he'd finally get the chance to meet George, it'd be too late. Time would already be running out. Dream knew how to accept his feelings. He never suppressed or denied anything he had felt before. Accepting his feelings for George had been easy, but accepting the fact that even if George reciprocate his feelings, it would never work out was the most difficult thing he had ever tried to do in his entire life. It was just, as people say, bad timing. He was angry at Time. He wanted to torture it as it had tortured him. He wanted to ask the universe why it had given him the best thing he had ever had just to take every chance of ever having it away from him. He had said goodnight to George, so he wouldn't have to hear the voice he had fallen in love with while his thoughts were filled with absolute and full ache. He wished one thing he wish he would never have to long for: The relief of his feelings for George to dissipate. George was confused at Dream's abrupt depart. He couldn't handle not hearing his voice anymore. They both lay in their own beds in their own time, in the same room of the same house, but so far away. All this while the wind blow the single stem blooming from George's backyard, mockingly. This flower could survive young and beautiful from 1970, but Time couldn't wait for Dream.

# The Vase

Nick Armstrong, also known as Sapnap, was Dream's closest friend. They had met in 1962 after school. Dream was sitting on a staircase and Sapnap had just walked out of the gates stuffing papers into his backpack. A page of his math homework flew out, the wind blowing it to where Dream sat.

Sapnap ran quickly to the staircase to retrieve it when he spotted Dream right next to where it had landed, crying into his arms. "Are you alright?" Sapnap had asked the boy, who refused to look at him or show any indication that he had heard what he said. "I didn't come here to bother you, I just wanted my paper back." Dream revealed himself from his vulnerable position, avoiding eye contact with Sapnap before picking up the piece of paper and handing it to him. "Here you go, sorry." Sapnap retrieved the paper from Dream, and was about to walk away when he decided he didn't want to leave the boy crying on the staircase without at least knowing if he'd be able to get home safe. "You don't look like you're doing too groovy." He stated the obvious, and Dream just stared out in front of him, at a man clutching a bottle in his hand and yelling at a woman. Sapnap followed his line of sight, and after realizing what Dream was staring at, he made a sound indicating he had understood, "Is that why you're sad? Who is that?" Dream stayed quiet for a moment, wondering why this boy had been so interested in his situation. He was cynical and was looking for a deeper reason as to why the boy had cared so much, but couldn't find any. "My dad." Dream finally spoke, shooting lasers at the drunk man in the parking lot. Sapnap sat down next to him, "Is the woman your mom?" "Yes." Dream responded, sniffling and wiping his eye with the rough sleeve of his jacket, "My dad is a right fleabag to her. He doesn't hurt her but he yells at her. And me." "Mine is too." Sapnap put his legs up to his chest and wrapped his arm around them, "Mom says it's because he's still bugged out from the war." Dream's eyes widened, "My mom tells me that too." He looked happier knowing he wasn't the only one in his current situation, "Your dad fought in the war, then?" "Yeah," Sapnap turned toward the boy, "he has a lot of medals and stuff, he doesn't let me touch them." "My Dad never got any awards," Dream gestured toward his father, who was leaning on his car while his mother was pinching her nose in annoyance, "it's okay though, he doesn't really deserve them." Sapnap caught

sight of a white slug bug car and got up quickly, "Oh no, I have to go." He told Dream, who got up as well, "Maybe we can talk more at school?" "Definitely," Dream held out his hand, "I'm Clay. I'm in Class B." Nick took the boys hand and shook it, "Nick." He introduced himself, "I have to book it, but meet me here tomorrow after school again." He shouted as he ran towards his car. Dream agreed, and looked over darkly to his parents in the parking lot. He was still afraid to go over to them and encourage them to drive him home already, there was too much tension he felt but couldn't understand. He started walking over to them anyway, when he saw Nick running back toward him, "My mom said she can give you a ride to my place. You dig? You can stay over for a bit too." He offered. Dream's eyes widened and he nodded enthusiastically, "I'd love to, thank you so much Nick." "No problem, I can show you my Dad's medals too." Nick said excitedly as they walked to his car, "Do your parents mind?" "They don't really care if I go out, as long as I get back before it's dark." He looked over to them, still fighting and not noticing him walking with Nick to another car, "I'd rather be somewhere else anyway." "Don't worry." Nick patted him on the back, "Consider us friends now. You can visit anytime you want after this and we can read my new comics." Nick smiled as he opened the car door for Dream, who got in and smiled. It was his first time ever making a friend.

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With their close friendship, it was impossible for Sapnap not to notice his friend looking dark and dreary lately. He had offered visits to his house to talk about whatever it was, but Dream always waved him off, saying it was no big deal. "Jeepers Creepers, you're scaring me Clay. What's been bugging you?" Had it been a normal situation, Dream would have told Sapnap everything. He could trust him with his life, and he also knew he would give him the best advice, being the perfect balance of criticism, judgement, and comfort. How could he tell his friend of such a problem, though? How could he tell him that for the past two months he had been in his room talking to a boy fifty years ahead of him in time. Sapnap believed everything Dream said, but if there was a line to that this would definitely have crossed it. Another problem would be that even if he left out the phone call details, he wasn't sure how Sapnap would react to him falling for another boy. Sapnap had always been supportive of everyone, but they were best friends and he was

scared as to what his reaction would be. So, as much as he wanted to tell him what was going on, he didn't really know where to start. "Just the blues." Dream took a sip of soda and avoided his friend's eyes, "It happens." "You think I didn't notice that, man?" Sapnap took the bottle of soda from him and put it down on the table, "What I mean is what's the reason for it?" Dream fidgeted with his hands, "Heartache." Was all he could let out of his mouth. Sapnap's mouth gaped opened and he suddenly looked offended. "Heartache?" Sapnap bellowed loudly, "You never told me someone snatched your heart up, and I find out because they broke it?" Dream groaned and buried his face into his hands, "I know and I'm sorry." His voice was muffled, "I was just scared of what you'd think." "What I'd think?" Sapnap sounded confused, "You've told me about girls plenty of times before, why are you scared now." "That's the thing." Dream lifted his face, his heartbeat rapidly increasing as he inhaled and looked his friend straight in the eye, "It's not a girl, Nick." He exhaled and closed his eyes, almost to protect himself from a force that didn't exist. Sapnap took this information in. He was obviously surprised, but he calmed down quickly and sat closer to Dream, "That's-" He let out a breath, "not what I expected, but it doesn't bother me. Did you think it would?" Dream opened his eyes and shook his head quickly, "No, of course not. I just thought it'd be different because you and I are best friends and I was scared you'd see me differently." Sapnap laughed, and Dream was taken aback, "Come on, man. You'll always be cocky, goofy Clay. Whatever kind of person snatches your heart can't change that, and it definitely doesn't change what I think of you." Relief flowed through Dream's body, and he wondered why he had waited so long to tell Sapnap about his situation. He smiled, "I'm not full of myself, by the way." "No, you definitely are." Sapnap grinned, "So who's the lucky guy?" He knew Sapnap would ask that, and he still didn't have an answer prepared. He thought for a moment, "He doesn't live near here." "Dang that's rough," Sapnap empathized with him, "distance doesn't do anyone well. Is that the reason for the heartache?" "Y-yeah." Dream answered honestly, because it was the truth. The problem was indeed distance, but it was something Sapnap just wasn't ready to hear about or try to understand quite yet. Maybe one day, but for now he wanted to keep the phone calls a secret. Dream was staring at a vase of orchids in the corner of Sapnap's room. They were slowly withering, which bothered him because he wished Sapnap would take better care of them. They were kept in a bad place, just sitting in water in a dark shadow of the room when they

belonged in the soil with the sun. He realized that you can only have flowers away from where they're supposed to be for so long before they start to die. There's a place for them to live, to belong. That's the only way that flowers could survive time, if they stayed where they were supposed to be. It was like him and George. They both had their places where they belonged, and it's best if they stayed in them. He would have loved to have him close to him, but just like the flowers dying in Sapnap's vase, he could only wait for so long before inevitably their chances would wither. Why is it so hard to move on, then? It was easy. He loved when George would say he missed him too. He loved when George seemed so interested in his little anecdotes and stories he'd never have told anyone else. He loved when George would stop himself when he realized he was chewing too loudly over the phone. He loved George's voice and hesitation when Dream told him too much too fast. He loved his little chuckles and when he'd try and hold back a laugh. He loved when the phone would only ring once before George would answer and say hello to him so quickly. There was so much to love about him, but he was better off being loved by someone who could be there. Someone who could tell him all those things to his face while holding him close. Someone who could look him in the eyes and assure him when he felt like he was being lied to. Someone who was from his time. That was just something Dream couldn't give him, and it killed him so much. He maybe was full of himself, because he felt like George deserved him. George would subtly imply that Dream was the only one that had understood or ever talked to him with his full heart. He was surely full of himself for feeling like he deserved George. Those were the things that Dream could give him. His listening ear, his reassurance, his funny stories that would make his day, but that just wasn't enough. He couldn't have George, and he just couldn't wait for him. "Clay?" Sapnap was waving his hands in front of Dream's face, "Dream? Clay? Pissbaby?" Dream snapped out of his thoughts, trying to hold back tears, "You should really take care of those flowers, Nick."

# You Were My Flower

He unlocked his phone to read the messages he had just received, they were from Wilbur. Wilbur:George, good morning Don't worry I'm not asking you to babysit Tommy again haha I actually wanted to see if you'd like to come to dinner tonight? The last seat was actually reserved for my father, but you know he's at the hospital nonetheless he insisted someone fill his seat as he didn't want it to go to waste George had not been out to a proper dinner since he lived with his family in England. The ones he had been to had been strictly business related with colleagues, with the talk being mainly about work, so he didn't count those. George:Are you sure your father doesn't mind? Wilbur's typing bubble appeared right away. Wilbur Well, he insisted Lol, so I'd assume not George:I'd like that, then When and where? Wilbur:6:30 at The Minx, better to get there at 6 George's eyes widened, The Minx had been the priciest restaurant in town. Even the wealthiest of people George knew lived here and couldn't afford eating there more than once or twice a year.

George:I'll be there Wilbur:FYI there's a dress code If you need a suit or anything let me know George:I'm pretty sure I could dig one up out of my closet Thank you again Wilbur Wilbur:Don't sweat it, mate See you there George locked his phone and started to overthink. He calculated how long it would probably take to eat dinner there if it started at 6:30, maybe even later if it included waiting for the food. He definitely would not make it back to his house by eight o' clock when Dream would call. As much as it hurt him, he hoped Dream wouldn't call. At least not on the one night that wasn't at home awaiting it. He couldn't bring himself to decline Wilbur's offer.

Reserving a seat at The Minx required a payment itself, and Wilbur's father himself (who was horribly sick) had said he did not want his seat going to waste. There was no way to say no to Wilbur without it paining him. So, he threw clothes out of his closet one by one until he found a suit that was intact enough to wear. He ironed it out until not a fold could be seen, and dug into his drawer for a tie that went with it. It was a black suit, with a small chain hanging from the front pocket. He paired it with a white collared button up and black trousers with a belt. He had been too scared to wear it until the very last minute he had to go, as he was clumsy and just knew he'd spill something on it or damage it any other way. Once it had hit 5:30, George had

put on the suit. He took a look at himself in his full length mirror he had never bothered looking at himself in, and not to seem full of himself but he thought he looked quite dapper and handsome. Thoughts then consumed his brain. He would have loved to have Dream see him in something like this, especially since all the outfits he had described himself wearing to Dream had been casual and not that interesting. He took one last look at the phone, praying again that he wouldn't miss a phone call, and then once more that Dream was okay. He made his way to the car and drove over to The Minx, which was perched on top of a small hill and (to his dismay) had paid valet parking. He chose to park his car himself near the front, so it was faster to get to and he didn't have to pay anything. He must have been early because he had not seen any of the Soot family anywhere, so he sat down on one of the benches to wait for them. He watched the cars that would pass by, giving their keys to a valet parking worker and walking toward the restaurant in their best clothes and jewels. He wondered what kind of lives they had and why they could afford to eat at such a place. Wives in their silkiest of dress clutching the arms of husbands with the most bejeweled watches. He wondered how happy they could be with all that money. George busied himself with observing, until he got to the third car in the valet line, where two brothers stepped out, one with his wife and kid. It was Wilbur and his family, looking fancier than they had ever seen them before. He couldn't even fathom the cost of Niki's dress, which sparkled in the last of the sun before it set as she was helped out of the car by Wilbur, who was looking great himself. Techno had appeared to have gotten a haircut, and even Tommy was in a suit and acting on his best behavior. Wilbur handed his keys to the Valet man, and led his family over to the revolving door near where George sat, "George!" Wilbur greeted excitedly, giving him a hug. "Looking fresh, mate. Have you gone inside yet?" "No," George played with the sleeve of the white button up that was exposed under the black suit, "I was waiting for you guys, actually." "Oh well then, let's go on in." Wilbur suggested but Tommy was already ahead of him, playing with the revolving door. Niki made her way to get him to stop but ended up having to chase him through the spinning door on a different panel as he laughed and kept the door spinning. George walked in after Tommy and Niki had finished their hilarious chase around the door. The restaurant looked like a mini cathedral, with paintings of angels and other such beautiful scenery surrounding him. The chandeliers held real wax candles that illuminated the restaurant in the most perfect way, leaving his

face in a yellowish glow. Wilbur spoke with one of the people at the reservation lectern, who nodded at him continuously before checking his book for Wilbur's name. After a while, Wilbur gestured for them to follow the man to their table, which was circular with a white tablecloth and a spinning glass circle within it for food. After the party had sat down, the waiter informed them he'd be back in a bit to ask them what drinks they would like. "This place is cool but it looks old, Dad." Tommy said as he played with the handkerchief on his plate, which had been folded into a swan. "That's because it is old, it has been up since 1916." Wilbur informed his son, who instead of being impressed looked disappointed that it had been an older place. Tommy continued fidgeting with his handkerchief, making Niki laugh as she hugged him from the side. Techno sat casually, looking over the menu. "Thank you again, Wilbur," George said from the other side of the table from him, "this must have cost a fortune." Wilbur laughed and shook his head, "Oh, no," he denied, "this was paid for by an old friend of my dad. His name is Darryl Noveschosch. He co-owns this restaurant, and after hearing Dad was in Florida he offered to treat us to a dinner. Of course, Dad couldn't come and he was quite sad about it, but he made us keep the reservations anyway." "I call him Mr. Halo," Tommy told George, "because one time I was playing with my food when I flung an onion ring on his head. Uncle Techno said it looked like a Halo." Techno sniggered from behind the menu, and the rest of the family looked over to him. "So you're the reason Tommy calls Darryl that?" Niki asked while staring him down. Techno put his hands up, "Look Darryl's a cool guy he didn't mind." He tried explaining himself but Niki was shaking her head. Though, George caught her smiling. "Anyway," Wilbur continued, "yeah, this really didn't cost us so you definitely don't owe us." The waiter came by asking them what they wanted to order. It was an all you can eat restaurant, since it was the seats that had to be paid for, so George didn't have to go looking for the cheapest stuff on the menu. He ordered a steak with some gourmet mashed potatoes and vegetables, with a soup on the side. Everyone told the waiter their orders, and Niki ordered for Tommy before the waiter walked away and they awaited their food. They immersed themselves in conversations. They talked about their childhoods, jobs, and what they enjoyed doing in their free time. A couple of conversations were fit in before the waiter came with their food, which was plated beautifully and smelled amazing. George's mouth watered as he cut into his steak and took a bite. It was perfect. The Soot family had obviously

eaten here before, because they seemed so used to the ornate decoration and skillful cooking of their meals. George continued to eat, embarrassingly faster than anyone else at the table, who didn't seem to mind.

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Dream sat by the phone, digging his hands into his hair. It was 7:58, and he knew he wanted to call George because he had put it off for over a week. He felt selfish, because he knew George had probably been worried and lonely because Dream had not called just to benefit himself. It was the simple "can't live with you, can't live without you." He couldn't live with talking to George any longer knowing he could never have him, and he couldn't live without the comfort and happiness George brought to him that no one had done in a while. But tonight, he wanted to explain. He wanted to tell George how he felt, and he wanted to say sorry. Sorry that this had to be the last phone call. If he wanted to hear anything for the first time, it was if George had loved him back. Even if it was the last time, he knew he wanted to hear it at least once. He took a pen and scribbled in his notebook, "September 8, 1970/2020: To him I say "I love you", and "goodbye".". He dialed the phone and awaited George's usual quick answer... but nothing came. He called over and over but it donnend the same result. He immediately knew he had messed up not calling George. He must have been angry and dodging the calls now. He started banging his fist into the table, crying. He was lost on what to do, and he was even more lost on how he felt. He knew this would hurt George, yet he's still doing it to save his own feelings... ..but he wasn't just saving his own. This was saving George, too. It was making sure George would move on. If George felt the same way, continuing the calls and falling for each other more and more would make it worse for both of them. This was the right decision. He knew once he wrote what he was about to write, there was no turning back. He glanced at the sketch of George on his wall, clicked his pen, and started to write on the last page of his notebook, To my next of kin, a friend, or whoever I pass these notes onto: I know I have asked for so much from you, but I make one last request.

On September 9, 2020, 9:30 AM, I would like you to...

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Wilbur and Techno's phones were vibrating simultaneously. Wilbur picked up his, "Hello?" Wilbur listened to the speaker on the other end before getting up quickly, "Oh shoot." He wiped his mouth with the handkerchief, "Niki I gotta go, it's dad there's an emergency. Stay here and eat." He told them, still on the phone. "Wait Wil, I'll go with you." Techno got up as well, taking one last french fry and eating it. "The valet will take forever." Wilbur was speaking on the phone, "He wants to see who?" Wilbur furrowed his brow before he looked to George, "George I'm sorry, but do you think you can take us?" George was done eating, and he looked at the frantic brothers, wanting to help, "Of course. I didn't park the valet, I can take you guys wherever you need to go, it'll be faster to get to my car." He agreed, and Wilbur ending the phone call. The three ran out of the restaurant to George's car.

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It was 8:30 when they reached the hospital, and Wilbur frantically asked the nurse to visit his dad, and they were led down the farthest hallway where his room was. George let the two brothers have some privacy in there, as he didn't know what was going on. After ten minutes, Wilbur and Techno walked out of the room, a bit weary. "George." "Wilbur," George got up and walked to him, "is everything alright?" "He seized up, but for now he's stabilized." Wilbur informed him, but George knew there was more he had to say, so he waited. "He wants to see you, George." Wilbur finally said, scratching the back of his head where his hair lay frizzed up from all the running. "Me?" George looked confused, "Why me?" Wilbur shrugged sadly, "To thank you for bringing us here." "Oh," George responded, "I can do that, yeah." Wilbur nodded and he led George into the room. He took out his usual pocket notebook and started flipping through it when he reached the last page and made a face. He looked like he read something that wasn't written there before, before walking out the room, leaving only George and his father. An old man lay on the bed, IV tubes sticking out of his arms and the constant sound of beeping surrounding the area. George wondered why he never went crazy. The man stared at him for a few moments, opening his mouth to talk but nothing came out. George walked over slowly and awkwardly, before taking a seat on a small chair beside the hospital bed. "Er- Hello, sir." The man continued to stare at him, slightly shaking. George didn't know if the man had

trouble talking or if it was for other reasons, but he felt awkward and didn't know if he should say something else. The silence continued for what felt like forever, before the man finally spoke with a raspy, shaky voice, "Hello, y-young man." "Hi," George looked to him, "I'm friends with your sons." "Oh yes, yes they've mentioned you before." The old man nodded slowly, his eyes slightly squinted at him. "I just wanted to thank you for the things you've done for them." George shook his head with a smile, "Oh they have done more for me than I have for them, trust me." The man kept nodding slowly, and then both were put in another slow moving silence. George was about to say goodbye, when the man stopped him, "Do you know what the date is, young man?" George raised his eyebrows, before getting his cellphone and checking the date, "September eighth, sir." "The eighth of September already? How could I be so predictable." Wilbur's father said softly with a small laugh. "What was that, sir?" George politely asked the old man to repeat himself, but he shook his head indicating he was talking to himself. George got up slowly, "Well it was nice talking to you, sir, but I'm sure you'd like to speak with your family again." He said as he waved goodbye and started to walk away. George had his hand on the doorknob, about to open it, when the old man raised his voice a little. "He called." George turned around, "Pardon?" "He called you today, but you didn't answer." George's eyes widened, he started to shake and his heartbeat increased. Could this man be talking about the phone calls? "I'm sorry, sir," George managed to say, "but I don't know what you're speaking about." "You know damn well what I'm talking about." He pointed a finger, and George started to walk back toward him, sitting in the chair. George was confused and scared at the same time, and his breath caught in his throat a few times, and he'd have to cough to remember to breathe. "Breath, young man." Wilbur's father urged, as he sat up slowly and carefully. George did so, and he finally brought himself to face him. "Y-you know about the phone calls?" George stuttered on his words, which to his confusion highly amused the old man in front of him. The old man chuckled, "Of course I know about the phone calls." "Are you friends with Clay?" George asked, using Dream's real name in case the man never knew about the nickname. "Clay," The man started, "the boy who'd lock himself in his room every night just to talk to someone on the phone." George said the first assumption that came to mind, "Are you.. Sapnap?" The man jumped a little at the mention of the name, before looking George in the eyes and shaking his head slowly and dimly "Nick Armstrong passed in March."

"Oh, I'm sorry," was all George managed to say. "Who are you then?" There was silence once again. The loudest silence George had ever had to sit through in his entire life as he tried to shake away the anxiety of another person being in knowledge of him and Dream's phone calls. "I'm an old man, George." He stared deep into George's eyes, so deep he felt his corneas being cut, "You called me that yourself." George had started to nod before what the man said sunk in. His eyes widened and his chest pounded violently as his breath was running out of his throat quicker than he could manage. He looked at the man, and saw the familiar green eyes. The eyes on the photo of a man he kept on his desk. A man smiling while holding his cat. "D-dream?" He sputtered, "It's you?" Talking felt like an earthquake from how much shaking was going on inside his throat. Dream smiled, his oh so aged eyes filling with tears, "How are those flowers, George?" George let out a sob before stuffing his face into his hands. All of his worries seemed to subsided slowly. Dream was alive, but- "Are they growing alright?" Dream once again asked about the flowers. George nodded, wiping his eyes, "The stem's out now." Dream looked reminiscent, after all, George's events were in a span of a few weeks, while for him it's been fifty years. "Do you remember why you didn't call this week?" George had asked bravely, and Dream nodded. "I do." George wanted answers, "Can you tell me, Dream? Please?" "I was young, George. Obviously I'm not anymore, but the me you're talking to is still young, and naive, and confused." Dream began, trying his best to hold back his emotions but ultimately failing. "Why was he?" George tried to level with the man, but couldn't understand. Dream put off the question, "And he was stupid, at times, but he knew how he felt." George fixed himself onto the couch, "How did he feel?" "Do you love him, George?" Dream suddenly asked, and George's eyes widened. George knew he had felt some sort of emotion or pull toward Dream, but he never took the time to think about what it was. All those times he'd change his whole routine to fit Dream's phone calls, and all those times he'd stare at the handprints on the wall and wonder what it would be like if they had made them together. He knew how he felt, he just couldn't name it. All this time he couldn't bring himself to say he was in love. George couldn't help but notice Dream referring to his past self as though he was a different person. "Why do you call yourself 'him'?" "I'll answer your question after you answer mine." Dream said plainly. George took a deep breath in, "Yes. I do." He had finally admitted, but not to the Dream he wanted to say it to. Dream nodded, tears filling his eyes slowly,

"To answer your question George, I'd be answering all your other ones." George nodded, awaiting what Dream had to say. "He and I are different people," he began, "maybe not literally, but emotionally we're in different stages of our lives. I was young, George. Young and in love with you," George jumped a bit after hearing that, getting chills, but he continued to listen. "but also realistic. I knew I just couldn't be in love with you." He explained , "I saw a vase of flowers at Sapnap's house. They just sat in water, dying and cold. They're meant to be in the sun, to grow and live." George sat up to listen, unsure where Dream was going. "They had their own place, where they're meant to stay. Yes maybe a couple days earlier the flowers looked beautiful in that vase, but after a while they started to crumble. That's what happens when things don't stay where they're supposed to stay." Dream said. "What does this have to do with you and me?" "The flowers are you and me." Dream elaborated, "We're meant to stay in our own place. We can't get caught up trying to live in someone else's." George had taken it in, he didn't know that was what Dream had been feeling lately. "George." "Yes, Dream?" "My heart couldn't be in 2020 when it belonged in 1970." Was all Dream said. That line shattered George's heart to pieces, but Dream wasn't done. "I want you to move on, George. I know I don't have much time here, I feel like I'm gonna die tomorrow- "Don't say that." George snapped. "It's true, George. Look what happened when I moved on. You saw what happened. You've met my beautiful family, and I love them. That's the life I was given because I knew inevitably we would never have worked. It was you I loved, George, there's no doubt about that, but it couldn't have happened." Dream scolded, and he exhaled, almost apologetically. "I can still talk to you over the phone, Dream." "You can't. Tomorrow's the ninth of September, George. I made sure you couldn't call again." George was confused, how could Dream have turned out to be so cruel? "What do you mean you made sure?" "George I did what I did to save you, to help you move on. You know deep down we never could have happened-" Dream started coughing and the beeping on the monitor started to increase. George was frantic "Nurse!" "Dream, you were my flower." George said, he knew it was cheesy but there was no other way to say how he felt. "You said it yourself. Flowers from 1970 couldn't survive that long." He heard footsteps running toward the room, and he backed away as doctors filled the area around Dream's hospital bed. Dream gave him one last look in the eye, "You

take care of those flowers, Wrong Number." He said as George's view of him became obscured by the nurses.

# The Notes

Clay Soot, also known as Dream by his closest companions, died on September 8th, 2020, 9:59PM at 71 years old. His polite request for George to take care of the flowers were his last known words. He was still capable of talking after that, he just refused to say any more, because he wanted his last words to have something to do with George. It was Wilbur who broke the news to George the next day over text, assuring him he wasn't at fault for any of it and that Dream himself knew his time was running out. George didn't know how to bring himself to talk to Dream over the phone knowing his future counterpart had lost his life, until he remembered what Clay had told him the night before he died. "You can't. Tomorrow's the ninth of September, George. I made sure you couldn't call again." George was trying to understand what that had meant, but he knew he was still going to sit for however long it took, just to wait for the phone to ring. He'd have to keep the fact that he had died to himself. He needed to hear Dream's voice again. The Dream that he loved. The Dream that was alive. George was busy in thought, when he heard knocking from downstairs. It took everything in him to get up and push himself downstairs. Not to mention the fact that he had not eaten breakfast yet. He opened the door to Wilbur, who had baggy eyes that were scarred from too much wiping. "Wilbur?" George led him inside, "I'm so sorry." George couldn't even finish the sentence without getting choked up with tears. Wilbur tried his best to smile, "Don't be, nothing's your fault." George couldn't fathom how much grief him and his family were probably in. His heart broke when he thought of Tommy. How Tommy was expecting his grandpa to come back. He couldn't imagine how hard it was for Wilbur as a father to sit him down and tell him the truth. They had just gotten close, too. George helped the man walk inside, his footing had been so unsure and confused, "Why did you come here, Wilbur?" "I have to tell you something, George." He turned to George, trying his best to keep his composure but it was obviously backfiring. "Sure, anything." George sat down in front of him, offering a glass of water and some tissues, patting him on the back. Wilbur thanked him before taking a deep breath. "My dad was a great man." His voice shook, and every bit of him was slowly crumbling like a sandcastle that a million hands were trying to keep together. George nodded, Wilbur had

no idea how much he had agreed with him. He listened on, taking a sip of water and trying to keep calm knowing what Wilbur was about to say was something about the man he loved. The man who was gone. "He'd tell us stories," "I remember." Wilbur laughed a little, "they were such absurd stories, but I believed them. Techno didn't, he was realistic, but me? Oh I soaked up every word of his storytelling until I fell asleep." He looked reminiscently in front of him. "The stupid one about him climbing a tree to protest not cutting it down, and how he got struck by lightning after, and all those times he and his friend Nick would go out and set firecrackers into the sky at helicopters." George chuckled along with him, he wondered what other insane things Dream supposedly did in his life. The thought of it warmed and eased his heart a bit. He knew that Dream was satisfied and had lived his life the way he wanted to. "There was a story for every single night." Wilbur turned to look at George, "That was how many he had." "I'm sure he loved telling those stories as much as you loved hearing them, Wil." George comforted. "I did love hearing them. I loved every single one of them." Wilbur's fingers were being more fidgety than usual, "But there was one in particular that he'd have so much to talk about." George was genuinely interested, "And what story was that?" "The story of a boy he used to speak to on the phone." George felt his heartbeat stop for a second. Dream told his kids about him? More importantly, Wilbur knew about the calls this whole time? Wilbur didn't wait for a response, he just continued, "The way he'd tell the story. It felt so real, I just knew he wasn't lying to me. He never did." "Then what?" "Then I grew up of course. I stopped believing in Santa, then the Tooth Fairy, then eventually all of Dad's stories." Wilbur looked down at his hands, playing with his rings. He glanced at the clock, then hurried his speech, "I met a woman, got married, had a kid, and he knew that. He knew I wasn't his little boy that was in awe of everything he did anymore." George moved closer, every ounce of his body waiting to hear what Wilbur had to say next. "Then five years ago he came here." Wilbur was gesturing with his hands, "And he told me, 'Wilby, do you remember that story I used to tell you?' And I said of course I did. Then he told me that's why he came. I was confused, why would he visit me just to ask if I remembered one of his fictional stories." Wilbur sat in silence for a bit, constantly sniffling and blowing into a tissue. "He told me he was telling the truth. The story was true." Wilbur started messing with his sleeve, "I thought he'd gone crazy. I was about to kick him out of the house but he wouldn't budge, he's so

persistent." George knew that. Oh did he know. Wilbur patted his jacket pockets, and took out his old, worn out leather notebook. "He threw this at me before I closed the door on him." He showed it to George, "He said it was proof he was telling the truth." He opened a page and showed it to George, it had a series of dates with little notes on the side. July 31, 2020: George unburies the Time Capsule August 5-13: George repaints the exterior of his house dark gray. I chose that color. August 27, 2020: George unburies another Time Capsule August 28. 2020: George plants the flowers. I know him well enough to know he'll struggle. George now knew the true reason Wilbur kept this so notebook so close to him, and why he often wrote in it when he was with George. Wilbur took the notebook back, "This one's my favourite one." He showed George. September 2, 2020: I forgot to call George today. Whoever this goes to, please keep him company. George remembered, "Is that why you came to my house randomly with the Apple Cider?" Wilbur smiled, "Yes." He confirmed, "I wasn't initially going to fact check these dates, but I felt bad for him. So, I went on the day you unburied the time capsule, and there you were. I went more and more and saw that each date and event he wrote down had come true. He was telling the truth." George felt his heart warm. Even though Dream never had visited him before, he was always there for him this whole time without him noticing. In little ways, but in ways nonetheless. "May I see the phone, George?" "Oh." George said, "Yeah, it's upstairs in my room." George led Wilbur up the carpet steps to his bedroom. It was messy and he didn't have the energy to clean lately, so he was a bit embarrassed but Wilbur didn't seem to mind. Wilbur kept constantly checking the clock, it was 9:21. "Have to be somewhere?" George asked, and Wilbur shook his head. "I just grew a habit of checking the time." He explained. 9:24 The phone rang. "Is that him?" Wilbur asked. George ran to the phone, longing to hear Dream's voice. Longing to talk to him, knowing there was some version of him that was still alive. He didn't even consider how off it was that he had called in the morning. Dream never called in the morning. "I don't think I should talk to him," Wilbur said truthfully, "I don't know if I can bring myself to, and also it might mess things up, right?" He didn't know how any of it worked, he just assumed that it was safer not to risk anything. George nodded quickly at Wilbur, he didn't have anything on his mind other than answering Dream. He wiped his eyes, gave a huge sigh, and picked up the phone, "Dream?" "Hi, George." "Dream, you have no idea how happy I am to hear your voice."

George almost wailed, "It's been so long." Dream was silent from his end for a moment, "Remember that hand print I put on your wall, how you freaked out when I asked if you held it." George was lost, he didn't understand how Dream could start the conversation with such a random line, but he didn't care as long as he could hear his voice. "I do, why do you ask?" "I know you held it, George." Dream said boldly, "I know how you felt. I know how you feel." Dream was wrong. He had no idea how he felt. He had no idea what he had just seen the night before. "How do I feel? Dream, what are you talking about?" George didn't even care that Wilbur was still in the room, he talked as if it was him and Dream in the room. "You falter," Dream continued, "when I say something that goes a little too far. When I call you adorable, when I tell you I miss you." "Dream can you just cut this and get to the point?" George snapped, and Dream's breath caught for a moment, almost as though he wasn't expecting this kind of reaction from George. Dream closed his eyes, his leg shaking rapidly under his desk, "George, I love you." He said. "Wh-" "I love your voice, I love how absolutely dense you are sometimes even though you're one of the smartest people I know, and the way you answer the phone so fast when I call. I love the 'Hello Dream!'s' and the 'Goodnight, Old Man's and I even love how stupidly long you take to say you missed me back. Shoot, I love when you'd tell me I'm full of myself and how much you want me to shut up, but listen George, I don't want to shut up. I don't want to stop talking to you-" George held the phone in his feeble, unsteady hand as his eyes glossed with a layer of salty tears. "-and I just want you to love me back. I don't care if you say I'm full of myself, I know you love me back. So say it, please, George. I need to hear you say it at least once, I know you'll mean it so let's just get this over with." George's eyebrows furrowed, "Get this over with?" George repeated, "Is that what you think this is? You trying to coax me into telling you 'I love you' just to 'get it over with'?" "You don't understand what I did, George," Dream tried to calm him down, "if you don't say it now, you'll never get another chance to." "What are you talking about, Dream? What is this? Why did you call just to tell me this?" George was full of emotion. Between watching Dream before his last moments in life, and being on the phone with his past self pouring his heart out, he didn't know how to feel. "Fine then, let me make this easier." Dream scuffled a little before taking a deep breath, "Tell me you don't love me." "You wanted me to tell you I love you, now you want me to say I don't?" George wasn't being sassy, he was just genuinely confused. "Can you do

that?" Dream pushed, "Can you handle saying that? Which one of those two phrases would be true, and which one would be a lie if you told them to me right now." George was silent. "Please, George. Please I need to hear it." All George could remember was arguing with Dream in the hospital the night before. How he had told him that no matter what, he'd still find a way to talk to him over the phone. That was his first and last memory of seeing Dream in person, an argument. He didn't want another argument with Dream, so he collapsed, "I love you too, Dream." Dream sniffled, his voice uneven, "Thank you. That's what I needed, George." "You needed me to tell you I love you?" Dream didn't answer, he just sat on his stool clutching his phone so hard he thought it might crack into pieces, "I needed closure." He admitted, "Proof that once upon a time, in 1970, George Davidson, a man who didn't even exist yet, had loved me." "How are we going to continue to talk after this?" George asked curiously, "Now that we know how we feel." A single tear fell down Dream's face, "I- I'm sorry George." "Sorry for what? What do you keep apologizing for?" 9:30 Wilbur came up behind George. George had forgotten he was even there. "George, I just wanted to say one thing, and that's thank you." Dream's voice was so broken, and George found something off-putting about it, "Thank you for the late night talks, the stories you'd tell, everything. You changed my life, that's for sure. I just can't have my heart in 2020 when it belongs here in 1970. I'll fall for you more and if I go any deeper I won't be able to get out of it. Maybe, in another life you and I were together happily, the way I want it to be. The way it should be. But it's just—" Dream stopped talking for a moment, giving himself time to cry. "-bad timing." He finished. George was unknowingly crying as well, but he was still confused. Did this mean Dream would never talk to him again? Why would he do such a cruel thing? He didn't know that he just witnessed him die and now this. "Dream, what does this mean?" "I love you." Dream interrupted. "I love you too, but—" "Then that's all that needs to be said." Dream seemed to stop talking, but he said one final thing, "You take good care of those flowers, George." Dream hadn't hung up, but was silent. Wilbur appeared next to him, "George," He said, "I'm sorry, but he had one last request of me." George didn't understand why so many people were being so cryptic to him at once, all he wanted was an explanation. An explanation was what he got when he saw Wilbur pull out a red swiss army knife. And with Dream, with warmth, "We'll meet again." "Wilbur what are yo—" George raised his voice but found himself wrestling the phone from Wilbur. Wilbur

grabbed hold of the phone, clutched it in his strong, shaking hand, and with one slash of the knife, cut the cord. There was no explosion, or rip in time, or bright light to indicate any change. Just the cord breaking. The phone fell with a clang onto the floor. It was the end of any more calls from Dream.

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Dream sat on the stool, and he knew the moment the cord was cut. The dial tone just rang loudly in his ear but he kept the phone close to him, almost waiting for one more word, but nothing came. He didn't know how long he sat there, and he couldn't even bring himself to cry. He just held the phone the way he held it when he'd talk to George.

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George fell to the ground, trying to grab hold of the phone, "Why did you do that?" He wailed, trying desperately to put the pieces of cord back together, but there was no hope. Wilbur didn't falter or back away, he just ripped the last page of his notebook out and handed it to George, who's tears fell on it, blotting the ink slightly. To my next of kin, a friend, or whoever I pass these notes onto: I know I have asked for so much from you, but I make one last request. On September 9, 2020, 9:30 AM, I would like you to please sever my telephone connection with George permanently. Tell him I hope he moves on, and that the world will give him everything he deserves. Someone to love him, hold him, and tell him how beautiful he is. That is the end of my requests. Whoever I chose to fulfill them, I want to say thank you, and to have a beautiful day. George read the note over and over again. Dream had no idea what he had just done to him. George had seen Dream die twice. Any version of him, and any connection with him was gone forever. Wilbur helped his friend up and let him cry, comforting him. They had both lost a lot that day.

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The Orange petal of the Calendulas outside peeked out of the dirt. It was just beginning to live, and had no idea how much had just died.

# Epilogue

Clay had finally put down the phone, he had never touched it and avoided looking at it again. He just couldn't bring himself to. He moved out of his home shortly after. He had done so multiple times before settling in England. There he found a lovely woman named Ophelia, whom he married. The couple eventually were expecting their first child, and had been unsure on a name until Ophelia found a sticky note with "Wilbur" scrawled on it. She had asked Clay what the word meant, but he denied any knowledge of what it meant or where it came from. After some convincing, Clay agreed to name their first child Wilbur. Wilbur had grown up a happy childhood, with loving parents who gave him everything he ever wanted or needed. Clay would tell him bedtime stories every night, and sometimes Nick would come by to share in the tales too. A few years after, Ophelia was expecting another son. Around the same time, Clay's friend Techno had lost his long fought battle with cancer. Clay's second child was nicknamed Techno in his memory. Clay continued to keep his notebook of dates near him, planning to go visit George Davidson himself, but couldn't bring himself to, so he turned to the person who would believe him. Wilbur. He had continued to live a good and full life, but never forgetting the boy he spoke with on the phone.

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George stared at the handprints on the wall every night for weeks on end, until he noticed something written under them. I love you It read. He had placed his hand atop Dream's handprint and crumbled, listening to Unchained Melody until he fell asleep every night, taking in the words and cursing time. Woah, my love, my darling I've hungered for your touch A long, lonely time And time goes by so slowly And time can do so much Are you still mine? I need your love All he heard was Dream's voice. The photo of young Clay lay on his desk, framed and untouched. He had kept every promise he had made Dream. He took care of the flowers, in which two had bloomed. One was kept in George's yard to grow and live, while the other was cut and placed on Dream's grave. After a while he realized that what Dream did wasn't selfish, and that it was an act of love. It was the cliche "If you love them, let

them go." George was let go. Eventually George had gone outside for the first time in over a month. He smelled the fresh fall air and remembered that the last request Dream ever made of him was to live his life. So that was what he did.

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There came no explanation or answers about why one day, at the end of July both in 1970 and 2020, a phone call had been so powerful enough to break time. Neither George nor Clay had gone looking for any, or told anybody. The phone calls, however unexplainable and impossible, and all of their contents were still their little secrets. The calls made have defied every law of time and space there was, but it was no match for how much it had changed two young men's lives. The connection of those two hearts were stronger than the magic that brought them together. So, however painful and tragic the end of this story became to, now you know that once upon a time, in the same room, of the same house, fifty years apart, Clay and George Davidson had loved each other.

*The end ----*

# One Shot: Wilbur Grows Up

The little boy looked up at his father with starry eyes, wanting to defy the clear sign of night and begging to hear just a few more words from him. "Did the police get you, Dad?" The father shook his head with a grin, pointing at himself, "You really think I would let the silly police get me?" He asked, looking offended, "No. Sapnap and I were too stealthy. We hid in the bushes." "What about the helicopter? Did it crash after you threw fireworks at it?" The boy sat up straighter, inching closer to his storytelling father, filled with curiosity. The man laughed, rubbing his son's hair, "If it did, you wouldn't be here right now." "Why not?" The boy asked. Well, for one I would have been in jail." The father explained, "-and also if it had crashed I never would have met your mother." "How did you meet mum?" The little boy grinned, tricking his father into extending his bedtime and telling another story. The man looked on reminiscingly, "She walked up to us and asked why we were hiding in the bushes. She said we looked dumb." The little boy laughed, "You probably did look dumb, Dad." The father looked offended, "Your father? Dumb?" He threw a blanket over his son's head, "You think your mum would have married me if she really thought that?" "That's true, dad." The boy said as he took the blanket off his head, "You and mum are the best. She was probably your first love, right Dad?" The father's hand twitched, "Of course, son." He answered, the light in his eyes leaving for a split second but returning once he caught sight of his bright smiling son in front of him. "Good." The boy said, "Can I have one more story? I got an award at school, I think I de-de-" "Deserve?" The father finished for him. "Yes, that word." The father sighed, "Alright, what do you want to hear?" "My favourite one." The boy answered quickly, "About your friend over the phone." As unknowingly difficult as it was for him to tell that story, the man gave in. He could never say no to his son. "Oka-" "Can you two please be quiet?" Another little boy called out from the bed across from them, "I'm trying to sleep and you guys are so loud." The father rolled his eyes with a smile, "Just tune us out, Techno. Don't be a drama queen." The boy called Techno sighed heavily and collapsed onto his bed with a groan. "Anyway, before we were so rudely interrupted by your brother," the man continued to his son, "By then it was August of 1970...." ——

A woman was dusting the trophies on the shelf when her husband walked out of the children's bedroom. "Goodnight, Wilbur." She heard him say faintly as he shut the creaking door behind him, making her smile. He walked up to her with a tired stature and kissed her head. "Hello, love." She smiled, "What took you so long in there, Clay?" She asked curiously, dropping her duster and facing him. "He just wanted a lot of bedtime stories. He always does, Ophie." Her husband Clay answered, leading them both on the couch to sit. The woman named Ophie leaned back onto the couch, "He always goes on about this story you tell, but he won't tell me what it is." "That just means he kept my promise." Clay smirked, and Ophelia looked offended. "You made him promise not to tell me?" She looked jokingly shocked as she hit him with a pillow, "You're such a piece of work, Clay." Clay suddenly got a sense of déjà vu, but chose to ignore it. Instead, he walked up to the cassette player in the corner of the room and pressed play. Ophelia watched as he walked toward her with his hand held out, "You and I both deserve a break, don't you think?" He smiled, "May I have this dance?" She grinned as she took his hand and they stood in the living room waiting for a song to play. It was an annoying tape player, always took a while. The echoey room provided a reverb that compared to that of music playing in the ballroom, and as the tape clicked to indicate the song about to play, Clay held his wife close to him. "Woah, my love. My darling, I've hungered for—" Clay's eyes widened as he let go of Ophelia. "What's wrong?" She asked, watching him walk quickly to the tape player and mess with the buttons. Clay processed her question late, "Oh just—" He fumbled with the player until he found the button to skip the song, "It's just an overplayed song to dance to, don't you think?" She watched him curiously, seeing his eyes melt down to the floor slowly. There meant so much more to that song than she'd know. More than he'd tell her, but she held her questions in as he again took her hand to dance to a different song.

*April 3rd, 2015*

A baby was crying uncontrollably in a blond woman's arms as faint knocking could be heard at the door. "Wil!" The woman shouted, "Someone's knocking." "I know, I know." Wilbur ran to the door and opened it. It was his father. His eyes happy as if he were waiting for his son to invite him inside. "Er- Dad." He greeted awkwardly, "What are you doing here?" "Why, it's my birthday!" Clay said, and Wilbur looked confused. "I'm kidding, no it's not, I

just wanted to see if you'd remember." "Oh." Wilbur managed a small smile, "Why are you here, then?" Clay was about to answer when a large thud was heard across the street. "What in heavens was that?" Clay asked. Wilbur waved his hand in disregard, "Just our new neighbor. He's had quite the trouble moving in." He indicated the large uHaul truck filled with furniture across the road. "That's actually why I'm here." Clay said quickly, and Wilbur raised his eyebrow in confusion. "What?" Wilbur asked, "Because of our neighbor?" Clay nodded slowly, "Remember when you were a kid," He began as he started walking into Wilbur's house, which shocked Wilbur but didn't surprise him as his father was the kind of person to enter a house uninvited. "Yes..?" "I'd tell you stories." "I remember.' ---- Clay was suddenly being ushered out of the house, "I'm your father, boy! You can't just kick me out of your house." "You haven't talked to us in years. You didn't even answer my call when I told you I was having a son. You showed up late to my wedding." Wilbur named the mistakes his father had made to him one by one, "And you come here with your absurd fictional story that I believed as a kid?" "You know I don't answer calls. Look, Wilbur you don't understand-" "No, you don't understand." Wilbur argued, "If you came here to say sorry or make up for it, I maybe would have forgiven you. Instead you just try and wedle your way into my family again after you for years weren't a part of it." Clay looked angrily at his son, but hurt was present in his eyes, "Fine. Kick me out. Just take this." He threw an old worn leather notebook at his son, "All I have to say is give it five years. In five years, you'll see." Wilbur watched his father walk away willingly. He expected him to fight his way back inside, or argue more, but no. He just walked away, leaving him only with this notebook. He disregarded it as he threw it onto a table nearby as he heard another knock on the door. "You don't have to let me in!" He heard someone shout from the other side, "But just know, that I am very, very sorry. I love you and your family Wilbur. Maybe if you'll let me, one day I can meet Tommy-" Wilbur walked closer to the door, listening to the rest. "-and I know things haven't been the same. I'm glad you chose to live with your mum after she and I separated but-" He heard his father sigh, "I still want to be your father, and I don't know how much time I have left to still be that to you." Wilbur heard the hurt in his father's voice, and tears fell down his cheeks without him realizing it. He sighed as he opened the door, ready to formally forgive his father after nearly ten years, but there was nobody on the other side.

*July 30, 2020*

Wilbur walked down the street, notebook in hand as he finally set to fulfill his father's outlandish task. He waited in front of his neighbor's house and waited for ten, fifteen, then thirty minutes. "Expected." He sighed as he made to walk away. Suddenly he heard his neighbor's door open, and he turned to see. A young man was walking outside with a shovel that looked heavier than what he could carry. He opened the door to his yard and walked around before finding a corner of the grass to start digging at. Wilbur's eyes widened. Could it be? No, this was just a coincidence. He kept watching the young man, and opened his notebook to check the date. "July 30, 2020: George unburies the time capsule" He took out a pen and wrote a small checkmark next to the date, and looked back up. He realized the boy George was looking at him, and he realized how creepy and suspicious he looked, so he started walking away. Wilbur went back home and collapsed on the couch, "Oh god." He sighed to himself, "He was telling the truth this whole time..."

# One Shot: Tommy & George's Day Off

George knocked on the door of the house, shuffling his feet on the doormat and awaiting an answer. He could catch various things going on inside, such as a child being scolded for what he could make out as "mixing every cereal." He laughed to himself, and after a minute of waiting, somebody finally opened the door. "George!" Wilbur grinned, "Sorry this was another last minute thing. We told Tommy we'd get him another babysitter, and we tried-" Wilbur walked George inside and continued to talk, "-we hired this guy named Zak, but Tommy didn't want him so we had to cancel. He insisted on you taking care of him." George felt his heart warm with admiration towards the child, "It's no problem. I don't really have work to do today so this isn't keeping me from anything." He assured Wilbur, who led him up to Tommy's room. He walked into the child's (quite awesome) room, and found Tommy sitting at his desk drawing comic strips of Minecraft characters. The child started to swivel around, "Dad! I added another scene to my- GEORGE!" Tommy ran over to him and gave him a hug, "Come look at my comics George." George gave a wide smile and followed Tommy to his desk, where lay various mediums such as paints and markers with mismatched caps. "Wow," George nodded, impressed, "did you draw all these yourself?" "Yes, but Dad drew this page," he flipped to a previous page in the book, "that's why it looks kind of bad." George tried to hold in a laugh at the child's constant but charming brutal honesty. Wilbur walked in again, "Hey George, we're going to be off now. Feel free to take him anywhere today as long as it's not too far from home." He handed George some money. "Be safe, Wilbur." George bid the man goodbye. Wilbur grinned and waved as he went down the stairs and out the front door. George turned to Tommy, who had put on a pair of sunglasses, "Just you and me, kid." Tommy told George with a straight, serious face. Then he took them off, "Was that good? I saw that in a movie Dad watched." "It was great." George laughed, looking around the room. George walked toward a shelf of toys on Tommy's wall, but his eyes fell instead on a book laying on the shelf. "I like that book." Tommy said from behind, startling him. Tommy took the book off the shelf and

showed George, "It has cool pictures but there's no color, so it's kind of boring." "What sort of pictures?" George ventured to ask, but Tommy was already open to the middle of the book. He flipped through until he found one he liked, "Look. This is my grandpa with Mr. Halo." He pointed, "They weren't old yet." It was a photo of Dream. He had one arm around his friend, and the other holding a champagne glass raised into the air. Though he was dressed fancy, his hair still resembled a look of newly getting out of bed. He also still possessed the grin that he had in the photo that Dream gave him. He wanted to stare at it a little bit longer, but Tommy flipped the page, "Grandpa used to tell stories." "I remember." Tommy smiled, "Most of them are fun about superheroes, but I don't really get this one, it has big words." He showed George a piece of notebook paper taped to the photo album, and George reluctantly read it. "I'm moving first thing tomorrow morning. Frankly I do not know whether I can part with the attachment I've created with this house, but I know I would tamper with the already fragile chain of events if I stayed. What would happen if I stayed? There are things I cannot forget that live in the confines of this room, and how ironic is it that if I continue to reside here, it would erase a whole timeline. Where is my heart, really? Moreover, when is my heart?" George unknowingly had the album in his hands now instead of Tommy as he flipped through the plastic pages. "That's Dad as a kid," Tommy explained about one of the photos, "he almost blew up the house with fireworks." George laughed out loud, "Where did he get fireworks anyway?" Tommy shrugged, "From Grandpa probably," he assumed, "he was crazy." "I know." "You knew him?" Tommy asked, his eyes flicking from the album to George. George scratched the back of his head, "I only met him once." "Oh," Tommy said, "I think he would have liked you if you talked to him more." George nodded slowly, his eyes slowly getting glossier, "What's this?" He asked about a page of an address and phone number book. "Oh, that's Uncle Sap's phone number," Tommy pointed, "he's not really my uncle but he was grandpa's best friend. I don't think the phone number works anymore though, Grandpa said it stopped working fifty years ago." George felt a little weary of himself going through the family's things, but his curiosity got the best of him. He sped through the pages until his eyes fell upon a newspaper clipping. "Beloved Governor of Florida dies of heart attack at age 49." It was at this that George felt a tear run down his face. Governor Schlatt's death was the reason and jumpstart to him meeting Dream. There was not a thing in this photo album that didn't bring the memories

flooding back. "Why are you sad?" Tommy asked, "Grandpa always said that Gover- govern- whatever that word is- Schlatt man was a- a- " "A what?" George asked, but Tommy looked weary. "It's a bad word." George smiled and gave a small sniffle, "I'm not sad I'm just," he tried to find the words, "remembering things." Tommy narrowed his eyes at him, then unexpectedly he gave George a hug, "Don't cry." Tommy said, "When he showed me these things, Grandpa Clay would cry too." "He'd c-cry?" George asked with a shaky voice. Tommy nodded, starting to look a little bit sad himself, "When I asked him why he said he'd tell me when I'm older." George felt himself slowly starting to cry. So much died along with Dream, and he wondered whether the version of himself back in 1970 is aware of that. Tommy continued since he realized George wouldn't say anything, "But he's g-gone now so, he can't tell me anymore, huh?" George gave the boy a small smile, "I'm sure you'll figure it out someday. He wouldn't leave you in mystery that much." "Are you sure you don't know him?" Tommy asked suspiciously, "Sounds like you do." He shrugged before heading towards the door. "Where are you going?" George asked as he wiped his face with a sleeve. "To watch Youtube." Tommy gave a mischievous smile, "I heard Dad tell the other babysitter where he hides the password." "Oh no now wait-" George put the book back on the shelf and followed after him, "your Dad is going get mad at me if I let you do that." "Please!" Tommy wailed, "They don't have the things I watch on Youtube kids. All they have is Cocomelon and it's so boring." "I'm sorry Tommy." Tommy groaned, "I just want my PS4 to come already so I can play games." "You want a PS4?" George asked, "I have one in my house." Tommy's eyes lit up, "Can we go? Please? Dad said we can go anywhere if it's close, and we're neighbors. Please?" He begged, and George sighed before nodding. "Alright, but let me let your dad know first." Tommy celebrated in the corner. — "Do you have gun games." "Yes, Tommy, but they're not for kids." George told the child as he scrolled through the games library. Tommy hopped off the chair in George's room, "You paint your room too?" He asked. George turned to see what Tommy was talking about, and realized he was looking at the hand-prints on the wall. "Oh," George said shyly, "that was just a project." Tommy looked around more, which George didn't mind since he pretty much looked around Tommy's room too. He saw Tommy kneel down near the wall, "You have a hole in your wall." He pointed to the area of the wall where Dream had hid the Walkman cassette player. "Oh yes," George said as he walked toward Tommy and knelt beside

him, "that's nothing." Tommy, being a curious child, stuck his hand inside. "I don't think you should do that, it's dirty in th—" But Tommy tilted his head and was pulling something out. "What is this?" It was a brown parcel that was sealed. George's eyes widened as he hastily took it from Tommy's hands. "Open it!" Tommy said. "Alright, alright." George said, a sort of feverish excitement taking over him. The first thing that fell out was a letter. George opened it quickly, his heart starting to ache with the rush. "It's my last day in this house today, and I don't know whether you will find this, or even think to check this spot of the house again, but I wanted you to have this. I figured this was the best fate for it, since I didn't want to leave them outside of the house with no one to take care of them. Take care, Wrong Number. -Old Man" It was a small, thin glass slide with a dark orange hue inside of it. A single pressed Calendula flower. — A few months earlier, in 1970: Sapnap had his hands on his hips, standing in the scorching sun, "So you garden now?" He asked, "Is this a thing?" Dream rolled his eyes, "I just like these flowers, alright." "What's so special about them?" Sapnap knelt down to pat the soil where Dream put the seeds. "Everything." ..... The small stem of the flowers had peeked out of the soil now, as Dream's telephone started ringing. He knew the phone line with George had been cut, but still he sometimes had a glimmer of thought that maybe George had found a way to call. Nonetheless, he answered, "Hello?" "Clay, dear." It was his mom, "Be safe. The hurricane's brutal and it has no mercy. It's killed my whole garden already." Clay's eyes widened as he peeked outside the window at the pouring rain. He hung up the phone, grabbed a coat and went outside. He fought through the storm and rain to the shed, where he found a sheet of tarp. It was hard to walk in the strong winds, but he fought over to the front yard, where he draped the tarp over the area where the flowers grew. He grew sick the next week, but he found it was worth it, as he came home from the doctor's office to his flowers still healthy and standing. ..... The sun hit the orange petals of the Calendulas perfectly. They glimmered in the sun, but suddenly a shadow casted over them. It was the shadow of a moving truck, in which Sapnap and Darryl had been trying to put a couch inside. "Clay, you have so much stuff. We're never going to finish this." But Clay was busy near the flowers, with a pair of gardening scissors. "Just leave them there." Darryl shouted, "No one's going to touch them." Clay turned toward them, "That's the problem." He told him, "No one will take care of them anyways." Darryl was about to argue when Sapnap looked to him and rolled his eyes, "Just let him kill the

flowers." He whispered, "Maybe it'll be therapeutic for him." ..... Dream had been kneeling inside his empty bedroom. Empty only except for a single telephone in the corner of the room. He wrote a note, then stuffed a flower pressing into a parcel. A sigh escaped his lips, "You weren't the only one growing flowers, George." He whispered to nobody. He got up, and with one last look at the room, the walls, paint, and sketch of George's face, he smiled and shut the door. Leaving the memories he made inside behind once and for all.